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Woman & Artist

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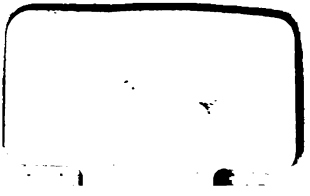

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WOMAN AND ARTIST

Woman and Artist

BY

MAX O'RELL (pseud.)

Blouët, Paul

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I Dedicate this Volume

TO

MY WIFE

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WOMAN AND ARTIST

I

FRENCH AND ENGLISH HOMES

THE English, whose knowledge of France consists in a fair acquaintance of that part of Paris lying between the Madeleine and the Faubourg Montmartre, affirm that family life is unknown on our side of the Channel, putting forward as proof the fact that the French language cannot boast of possessing the word *home*, that appeals so strongly to the British heart. Their conclusion is sublime: since the French have no such word, they say, it is very evident that they have not the thing. As to the word itself, I am inclined to think they may be right; we have not, or rather we have no longer, a perfect equivalent for the English expression, as our pretty word *foyer* is only used in pretentious or poetical language. In ordinary conversation the Frenchman does not refer to his *foyer*. *Il rentre à la maison, chez lui.* M. Perrichon, alone, returns to his *foyer*. Our old French possessed an equivalent for the English word

home. It was a substantive that is still with us, but we have it to-day in the form of a preposition —I mean the word *chez*, which is no other than the word *case*. The Frenchman of olden times said: "*Je rentre en chez moi.*"

But enough of philology.

I own that an apartment on the fifth floor, *au dessus de l'entresol*, would not suggest to the heart what the *home* does to every English mind. But the piquancy and humor of this malevolent criticism, founded, like all international prejudices, on the most crass ignorance and the narrowest patriotism, consists in the fact, that in all parts of London, at the present time, enormous barracks of eight and ten stories, called flats, are being raised, where the English, tired of the tyranny of domestics, seek refuge, at the terrible risk of likening to Chicago, not only that part of the city devoted to business, but all the pretty, peaceful neighborhoods, that made London, in summer, the most charming city in the world. They offend the eye, even in St. John's Wood and Hampstead, etc.

True, we have quite near Paris, Ville-d'Avray, Fontenay-sous-Bois, Enghien, Meudon, Bellevue, and I do not know how many more delightful places; but they are suburbs, and not *rus in urbe*, like Chelsea, St. John's Wood, Hampstead, and many others practically in the heart of London.

France, completely absorbed by Paris in all that is written about her in foreign countries, is

as unknown of the English people as the forbidden land of Thibet. Provincial France (where all enjoy the possession of homes, English fashion, *plus* gayety), the laborious and thrifty population of our villages (who are the fortune and salvation of France), our family life (narrow, exclusive, nay almost mean, I own it, but made up of love and devotion)—all these are a sealed letter to our neighbors over the Channel, of which a goodly number still hallow the venerable joke, that the French live on frogs and snails. For that matter, there are also in France a great many people perfectly convinced that an Englishman, tired of his wife, may with impunity go and sell her at Smithfield Market. We are quits. As we travel far less than the English, it is not surprising that we should know them still less than they know us. We cannot throw stones at them. In the utter ignorance of what exists and takes place in foreign countries, there are few nations to which France cannot give points

II

THE HOUSE IN ELM AVENUE

Of all the rustic neighborhoods bordering on London city, there is none prettier, fresher, and more verdant than St. John's Wood. It is the refuge of workers in search of light, air, and tranquillity. Painters, sculptors, writers, journalists, actors, and musicians—in fact, the majority of the highest intellectual Bohemia—inhabit these semi-rural acres, lying between Regent's Park and Hampstead Heath. Among the leafy haunts of St. John's Wood, numberless masterpieces have been produced by writers and artists whose fame has rung through the world. It is there, in short, that chiefly congregates the artistic intelligence of London. If you doubt my testimony on this point, apply direct for further particulars to the inhabitants of this favored district.

No. 50 Elm Avenue, St. John's Wood, did not attract the gaze of the passer-by. Walled around and almost hidden by large trees, the house, which could be seen through the iron gates, was a modest, unpretentious, two-storied structure. On the ground-floor it was traversed by a long vestibule. Those who had been privileged to enter it knew

that there was a long drawing-room and boudoir on one side, and, on the other, a spacious dining-room, and a library with a French window and steps leading down to a beautiful garden surrounded by spreading elms and chestnut-trees. On the outside, glossy ivy with gnarled stems mantled the lower part of the house, and in autumn bold virginia-creepers hung wreaths of scarlet around the chamber windows. At the side of the house, with the door opening on the adjacent street, stood a building with high north window, which indicated that the house was the abode of an artist. In this spacious, well-lit studio worked Philip Grantham, A.R.A.

The house was furnished with great taste; everything spoke of that comfort which the English value before luxury. A thousand and one little details told of an artistic woman's hand reigning supreme in the little domain, and one left the house feeling, "these people are happy and evidently well-off; there may be artists who vegetate, but Philip Grantham is not one of them." The garden was admirably kept, the lawn smooth and soft as a Turkey carpet to the foot; and when the sun filtered through the trees to the grass, you could imagine yourself in the depths of the country, instead of near the centre of a great city.

The studio was a favorite room of the Granthams. Loving care had been expended upon it, and the result was a worker's paradise that invited to lofty labors and cosey conversation. Dora

Grantham was her husband's comrade in art, and all the leisure that was hers, after seeing well to her household, was spent at Philip's side. The studio was more than comfortable—it was even luxurious, with its beautiful Renaissance mantel-piece of carved oak, its rich Oriental rugs and curtains and hanging Eastern lamps. All these gave an atmosphere of restful, dreamy ease to the place; and the fresh flowers that in all seasons filled the rare porcelain vases struck a note of gayety among the sombreness of the old oak furniture. A thousand curios from all the ends of the earth had been accumulated in this beloved apartment, and here, too, stood Dora's Pleyel piano and Philip's bookcase of precious volumes on art, all richly bound. A huge screen, gay with Eastern embroideries, hid the door that opened into the road; and in this veritable nest, nothing reminded of a hustling and bustling world outside. In summer, through the open door that led into the garden, one got a delicious vista of green foliage and turf.

In the centre of the studio stood two easels of almost equal size, and when I have told you that at these two easels, placed side by side, quite near each other, worked Philip and Dora, you will rightly understand that this studio had not been so fitted up to serve as a mere workshop, but that all its details had been suggested by the love of two kindred artistic spirits, who adored each other and passed most of their time there in loving rivalry and mutual encouragement.

Dora had such respect for the studio that she never entered it except dressed in some color that harmonized with the carpets and hangings and the rest of the furniture. To speak truly, this was not a difficult matter. Tall, dark, superb in figure and in face, her lips perhaps a trifle haughty in repose, but instantly softened by the lightness of her frank, gay smiles, which disclosed her little, even, white teeth; with dark hazel eyes through which you seemed to look into her soul as through two open doors; with a smooth, fresh, and clear complexion—almost all colors became her. Philip admired his wife in every separate color of the rainbow, but he had his preferences as a painter. He loved best for her certain crimsons and deep tones of orange and of Gobelin blue; and, as one must never run counter to the fads of an artist, it was generally in one of these tints that Dora dressed, when she wanted Philip to surpass himself at his painting.

At the time when this story begins, which is but one of yesterday, Philip was thirty-six and Dora twenty-seven. They had been six years married, and possessed a lovely little girl of five, so full of dainty grace and childish fascination, that when Philip was showing a new picture to a friend, and watching out of the corner of his eye to see if his work was being admired, as often as not the friend would say, "Ah, yes! that is a fine creation, a beautiful picture; but there," indicating the lovely child. "is your *chef-d'œuvre*—nothing can match her." And as in

Philip's nature the parent outweighed the painter, he would proudly smile and reply, "You are right."

Philip and Dora had begun their married life in the most modest fashion, but fortune had smiled on them. Each year the painter had become better known and valued, and his pictures more sought after. To-day he was not only well-known, but almost celebrated. Every succeeding year had deepened the sincere and strong love of these two lovers and friends, who led a calm, sweet existence, and trod, side by side, a flowered path, under a cloudless sky, with hope, glad labor, honor, and security as companions on the road.

I think I have said enough to convince the reader that if there existed a happy little corner of the world, it was No. 50 Elm Avenue, St. John's Wood.

III

THE PORTRAIT

On the 10th of May, 1897, that is to say on the sixth anniversary of Philip's marriage with Dora, he had promised to present her with a portrait of herself. The picture was all but finished. Only a painter would have noticed that it wanted a few more touches to complete it.

Hobbs, a faithful servant, who had been Dora's nurse in her old home, and had followed her to St. John's Wood when she had married, was dusting the studio, and gazing with admiring eyes at the portrait of Dora, which seemed to smile at her from her master's easel.

"Only a few flowers to put in," said the good woman, "and the picture will be finished. I have watched it for weeks. How wonderful it is! Just her beautiful face and kind smile. And to think that there are people who pay hundreds of pounds to have their portrait painted. How lucky a lady is to be the wife of a painter—she can get hers for nothing!"

She was interrupted in her reflections by a ring and a double knock at the studio door. Hobbs ran to answer the postman, and returned immedi-

ately, bearing in her hand a box from which some magnificent pansies were escaping. She had great difficulty in extracting the flowers from the badly crushed box.

"Pansies," said she, "for the portrait, no doubt —models for copying. If I were the wife of a painter, that is the only kind of model I would allow my husband to paint—from nature. Fancy women coming to a studio and undressing before a man!—the hussies! I am glad there are no such creatures wanted here."

It is necessary to be an artist, or at any rate of an artistic nature, to understand that it is possible to regard a perfectly nude model with as much *sang-froid* and respect as one would a statue; but the English middle class have not the artistic nature, and in the eyes of a good ordinary woman a female model is a lost creature, and the artist who studies and draws her an abandoned man. England produces something very humorous: this is the prudish model, who comes to an artist's studio, refuses at first, hesitates long, and finally offers to pose in tights. Better still. A French painter in New York was doing the portrait of a beautiful American woman in evening dress. When the head and shoulders were finished, the pretty American declared that she was too busy to pose any longer, and suggested that the picture might be completed from a model of her own height and figure, who could wear her gown. The painter agreed, but had the greatest difficulty in finding a model who would consent to exhibit her

charms, as the society lady of the United States had done freely and imperturbably.

Hobbs did not let her indignation get the better of her, and, consoling herself with the thought that "the creatures" were not wanted here, finished dusting the studio, and then, gathering up the pansies, took them to her mistress.

It was ten o'clock. Philip had not yet come to the studio. He usually began working at nine o'clock, and went on steadily until one, so as to profit fully by the best of the light that London puts at the disposition of an artist. Hobbs was astonished that her master was not yet at work, especially as she knew he had promised Dora to finish her portrait by the 10th of May. She herself had told her so. She began making conjectures, when a loud ringing at the studio door aroused her from her reverie.

She returned in a few moments, followed by a young man about twenty-five, tall and distinguished-looking, with a pleasant face, whom she had often seen in the house.

"This way, please, sir," said she, showing him into the studio; "master hasn't come down yet, but I am sure he won't be long. I will go and tell him you are here."

Hobbs knew that M. de Lussac was a friend, and not one of those inconvenient people who bore artists by going to their studios and talking inanities to them about their work. Besides, she had a list of the people whom Philip received at any time. And she went imme-

diately to inform her master of M. de Lussac's arrival.

Georges de Lussac was an attaché at the French Embassy in London. The manly beauty of his face and figure, his good spirits, elegant manners, and easy wit, added to the lustre of his name, made him one of the favorites of London society. No ball, dinner, or house-party was quite complete without him, the most sought-after man in the most aristocratic circles. He was a favorite with artists, whose works he well knew how to appreciate, and welcomed in literary society, owing to his brilliant conversational powers. These also gained for him the admiration of society women, who were fascinated by his soft, insinuating voice. There are legions of women who admire first in a man—a well-cut coat, an intelligent and handsome face, with a slightly cynical smile which seems so little in earnest that they say to themselves, "He is not serious; with him one can have a good time without fear of being compressed; and then, he is a diplomatist, and as discreet as a tomb." By reason of this reputation for discreetness, the diplomatist is beyond competition in the race for women's favor, without even excepting the brilliant cavalry officer, who appeals chiefly to women in love with glitter and who are ready to catch Cupid as he flies. I have not mentioned the tenor, who only makes his chief conquests among romantic and flighty women. In high society in France, England, and probably everywhere, the distribution of prizes is

somewhat in this order: First prize, the diplomatist; second prize, the officer of hussars; third prize, the tenor. *Accesserunt*, the remainder who have not much to share between them. In the remainder may be classed husbands.

De Lussac drew a gold cigarette-case from his pocket, took a cigarette, and, seating himself on a divan, began to smoke.

"I know of nothing pleasanter," said he, "than a chat and smoke in the morning with a painter in his sanctum. If I had to live all my time in one apartment, I would choose first a studio, secondly, a library; in all other rooms, one eats, drinks, sleeps, or bores one's self."

He gazed complacently around the studio, and his eyes fell on Dora's portrait. He rose, chose a good angle, and inspected the picture carefully.

"Beautiful likeness!" said he, "full of poetry—modelling perfect. It is simply quivering with life—and what lovely flesh color! There is not a man in England that can paint flesh like Grantham—no, not one that comes up to his ankle. Yet, with the most brilliant future before him, with the foremost place among the painters of the day close at hand, and certain to be a Royal Academican before he is forty—here is a man to whom artistic fame does not suffice."

Without noticing it he had approached the door leading to the garden. He opened it. The lilacs and hawthorns were in bloom, and whiffs of delicious scents were wafted into the studio.

"Who would imagine," thought he, "that in

this peaceful retreat, where the rustling of the trees is the only sound to be heard, a man was to be found who had invented a projectile likely to revolutionize modern warfare!"

Philip entered hurriedly.

"Ah, my dear de Lussac—no news yet?"

"No! the Commission is to-day sitting in Paris at the War Office. There is every hope of a favorable decision, I believe."

"Not so loud," said Philip, "not so loud; Dora might hear you. She knows nothing about it. Ah, my dear fellow, I have worked day and night to perfect that shell. The mechanism is so simple and yet so precise, that by winding up the little spring the shell will burst without necessarily striking any object on the ground or in the air, at any portion of its course, exactly so many seconds as is wished after it has been fired. The usefulness of the shell in the open field or against fortified positions is obvious."

"That is so! in every case the experiment has proved entirely successful; and we wonder how it is the invention was not immediately bought by the English Government."

"Do you think the Commission will soon arrive at a decision?"

"To-day, probably," replied de Lussac; "very likely in a few hours. We are expecting every minute a telegram from Paris."

"If they should buy it!" said Philip, dreamily.

"Well, then, you will be a wealthy man!"

"Shall I?" exclaimed Philip, his eyes shining

with joy—"shall I be rich? My dear De Lussac, I am quite satisfied with my lot. I earn more than I want. But my wife, my Dora—I want to be rich for her sake. She was brought up surrounded with every luxury. Six years ago, she left the house of a wealthy and generous father to share the life of a struggling artist. She never once complained, but has been happy and has made me the happiest of men. She has sat constantly by my easel, inspiring my brush by her sweet presence, and encouraging me by her constant and discriminating praise. To better appreciate my work, she has set to work herself, and has had two pictures hung at the Royal Academy, which have been splendidly noticed. How she has helped me! Sometimes she would come and put her arms on my shoulders and say, 'Go on, Philip, you are on the road to fame.' What a wife! Yes," said he, with earnestness and warmth, "I want wealth, but God is my witness that it is for her that I aspire to riches."

"Still in love, I see, *cher ami hein?* It is possible then to be in love with one's wife after six years, six long years, of marriage."

"Still in love! Why, I am only now beginning to love her as she deserves. Oh, that wealth may enable me to make her still happier!"

"Amen," said De Lussac, and he turned again to the picture.

"I think this portrait is delightful," said he, "you can never have done a better piece of work than this."

"Yes! I am fairly satisfied with it," said Philip; "it is like her, is it not? My wife with a bunch of pansies in her hand."

"I don't see the pansies," remarked de Lussac.

"No! I shall put them in presently. I shall finish the picture this afternoon."

"I see," said de Lussac, "that Madame Grantham will have the bunch of pansies in her hand, and that she will look lovingly at them."

"Yes, it is her favorite flower," replied Philip, "and mine too. There was a bed of pansies growing just under her window in that beautiful country house where I met her for the first time and where I courted her. She tended them herself, and called them 'her family.' Before entering the house, I would always pluck one and place it in my buttonhole. When it was faded, I gave it to her. It is utter nonsense, I know; but, after all, happiness is made up of little foolish trifles of that sort."

"The Anglo-Saxons!" said de Lussac—"a practical and yet sentimental race."

Philip went to a bureau and, opening a drawer, took out a little packet carefully tied up.

"Here they are," said he, "her family."

And he replaced the packet with great care.

"This is charming, quite romantic," cried de Lussac, "perfectly idyllic! You know, you are a curious mixture, *mon cher ami*. Fancy your inventive genius turning to an instrument of war that will make widows of wives who perhaps once had such a 'family.'"

"Oh, if I thought that!" exclaimed Philip.

"You would beg the Commission to kindly return you your shell," suggested de Lussac, with a wink.

"Hardly," said Philip, smiling, "I am too near the goal to do that."

"I think I had better be off now," said de Lussac, looking at his watch. "I am preventing you from working."

"Not at all, my dear fellow. I have, it is true, to finish this portrait to-day; but I have plenty of time. I will go and put on my working-jacket. Dora will be down in a minute . . . only, dear boy, do not mention the shell, will you? Not a word about it!"

De Lussac, left alone, could not control his curiosity. The drawer in which the pansies had been placed was only half shut. He took the packet in his hand and gave way to hearty laughter at the expense of Philip and Dora.

"Well! I'll be hanged," said he, "if ever a woman makes me save some withered old flowers tied in pink ribbon, like a box of chocolates."

If he had only looked round at the garden door, while indulging in these reflections, he would have seen Dora come into the studio.

Dora was radiant, in a pretty, simple morning gown, which accentuated her severe and classical beauty. Her large hazel eyes, encircled with long lashes, had an expression of exquisite sweetness; but they were also capable of making any man, who would dare look into them with any other

sentiment than that of profound respect, sink into the ground. Her haughty mouth, with its short upper lip, almost Austrian, betrayed a proud, susceptible, and ardent nature. She had the consciousness of her beauty and intellectual worth. The smallest underhand act filled her with repugnance. On seeing de Lussac with the packet of flowers in his hand and the drawer still open, she hardly knew whether to laugh or treat him with contempt. The corner of her mouth turned slightly up, and, with a little mocking smile which completely disconcerted the young diplomatist, she said :

"Well, Monsieur de Lussac, and how are you?"

"How are you, *chère madame*," answered he, in an embarrassed manner.

"Very well, thank you. I thought I heard Philip."

"He is in there, changing his coat." And, remarking that Dora had brought in a handful of pansies, he added :

"More pansies?"

"Why more? Ah! that is true, you have some also, I see?"

De Lussac reddened to the tips of his ears.

"Yes! A minute ago Philip was telling me the history of your 'little family,' and when he went out I could not resist the temptation of taking another peep at the little packet that he had left in my hand, and which contains the prologue of your love affairs."

Seeing himself caught in the act, he did not

hesitate to tell this little fib, so as to reinstate himself in Dora's good graces. She was taken in by it.

"Give the packet to me; you are a very wicked man—these are not for the profane; and Philip is still more wicked than you are to show them to you."

She put the packet back again. She was vexed, almost humiliated. Why had Philip mentioned the story of the pansies to Monsieur de Lussac? It could interest no one, except the two lovers, who had thus repeated their vows. Why had Philip shown him the packet? In her eyes, it was an almost ungentlemanly act. She passed a hand across her forehead, as if to brush away the ideas that came to her mind, and smiled good-humoredly once more.

"I believe you are jealous," said she, gayly.

"Not a bit—I am disgusted. Two people, supposed to be sensible, billing and cooing over a package of old flowers, after being married, let me see—how long?"

"Six years to-day."

"And after six years of marriage you are still in the region of romance? Will you allow a bachelor, an intimate friend of your husband's, to congratulate you with all his heart. I declare I almost envy your happiness."

"Well, get married yourself," exclaimed Dora; "it is very easy."

"Not for the world," said he, in a bantering tone. "I am too fond of woman in the plural to

ever love one in the singular. Besides, I could never marry a woman unless I could respect her."

"Naturally."

"Well!" exclaimed de Lussac, laughing heartily, "I don't believe I could respect a woman who would be willing to marry me."

"Oh! come, you are like most Frenchmen," said Dora, "not so bad as you would make people believe. You will succumb to the temptation all in good time. You will marry, you will love your wife, and, what is more, you will make the most docile of husbands. It is the most recalcitrant of you that generally become the model husbands in the end."

"Heaven forbid! I will succumb to every temptation you like to name except that one; if I ever find myself married I shall have been chloroformed before the ceremony. For fear of giving way to this temptation I will stick to all the others, in case they should forsake me—you see, I am a vagabond pure and simple."

"Women love vagabonds—many do at any rate. You will find a hundred for one that will have you."

"A hundred perhaps—one never," said de Lussac.

"And when you are old, who will occupy the other side of the chimney corner? A chimney has two corners."

"I know it," said de Lussac, "but there is also the middle, where I shall be very happy and comfortable—that is better still. No, no, long live Liberty!"

"Pure selfishness—and besides, conjugal life is the most comfortable."

"Undeceive yourself, madam; one lives as well at the club. One dines better at a restaurant, where for a small tip one may grumble and blow up the waiter to one's heart's content."

"You can do as much in your own house, and blow up your wife without its costing you a farthing."

The light-hearted gayety of the young man amused Dora. A woman, although she does not countenance that love of independence in her husband, admires it in other men. I feel inclined to believe that women have a mingled feeling of admiration and respect for the man who has not been caught in the matrimonial toils.

Dora was playing with the pansies that she had scattered on the table.

"You see these flowers," she said, suddenly, to de Lussac, "well, there is an impenetrable mystery connected with them."

"You don't say so," said he, noticing the comically majestic air she had assumed.

"Yes! a real live mystery. On our wedding day there arrived a bunch similar to this one. Who sent it? That is the mystery. On every anniversary of our marriage, we get another. Are the flowers for Philip or for me? More mystery. Philip says they are from some old admirer of mine; from some old sweetheart of his, I say. Still, they come, and are always welcome."

"I am not versed in the language of flowers," said de Lussac, "but I fancy I remember a little verse, beginning something after this fashion:

Pansies for thought—
Love lies bleeding.

I cannot recollect the words exactly, but perhaps there is a bleeding heart somewhere. Oh, this is terrible of me," exclaimed de Lussac, again looking at his watch, "it is eleven o'clock, and I am still here chattering. I ought to be at the Embassy; I must really go. Will you be kind enough to tell your husband that I will send him a wire as soon as I know something definite—no, no, I will come myself."

"About what?" said Dora.

"Oh! about something—which concerns me."

He shook hands with Dora and went out hurriedly.

Dora, left alone, began to arrange the flowers. The pansy was a flower which fascinated her, and suggested to her mind all kinds of fantastic faces. She seemed to see sad and solemn ones, some smiling and gay, others saucy; they represented to her a perfect gallery of weird faces. She chose some of the best, made them into a little bouquet for Philip to paint in her picture. Taking away one or two that did not harmonize with her dress, she placed the bunch on her husband's easel.

"Oh, what pretty flowers!" shouted Eva, who had just come into the studio, followed by Hobbs.

She was dressed to go out for her daily morning walk.

"Mamma, aren't you coming out for a walk with us?"

"No, my sweet," replied Dora; "I cannot this morning. You know that daddy is going to finish my picture this morning, so I must stay with him; he will want me."

"You are always with daddy," said Eva, pouting. "You never come for a walk with me."

"How can you say such things; you know I go out very often with you—but I can't to-day. To-morrow, yes! to-morrow. Come, be a good little girl."

"A good little girl," said Eva, sighing; "that's what you always say to me."

"When I was a little girl," said Dora, trying to look serious, "I, too, had to be good, you know."

"Oh, mamma! aren't you glad you're not a little girl any longer?" said Eva.

"Oh, what shall we do with her, Hobbs, if she is so naughty?" said Dora, taking the child up in her arms and covering her with kisses.

And yet she knew that the reproaches were well-merited.

"Is it true that mamma was a little girl first?"

"Of course, dear, certainly."

"Quite a little girl, and then as tall as that—and that—and that?"

"Yes!—and then like this," said Dora, touching the top of her head.

"Well, then, you had a mamma, too; that's grandma, isn't it? Was she pretty, like you?"

"Much prettier."

"Did she scold you?"

"Certainly, when I was naughty."

"Isn't it funny, though? Where is daddy?"

"He is coming in a minute, dearie. Come, it is time you went for a walk, Hobbs," said Dora to the good woman, who was laughing at the child's questions; "do not stay out very long, it is chilly, and Miss Eva might catch cold."

"Very well, ma'am," replied Hobbs.

Dora, ascertaining that the child was warmly enough clad, gave her bonnet-strings an extra touch, then looked at her and kissed her again and again.

Eva and her nurse went out at the studio door. The latter, finding a letter in the box, came back with it and gave it to Dora, returning again to the child.

Dora, remembering Eva's reproaches, felt the tears come into her eyes. With many women the mother kills the wife, but Dora was so much absorbed in her husband that she often reproached herself with not taking enough notice of the child. She was wife first, mother next. Yet God knew how she adored her child.

IV

DORA

It was past noon, and Philip had not yet set to work.

For some time past Dora had noticed that Philip had no longer the same lively interest in his painting, but she had been very careful not to speak to him about it. Dora was the ideal artist's wife, not only because she understood her husband's art, but also because she was keenly alive to the conditions under which works of art are produced. If she had been the wife of Bernard de Palissy, she herself would have broken up the furniture of her home to keep alive the furnace fire. Blessed with a calm, even temperament herself, she knew that the artistic nature is sensitive, susceptible, irritable even, and that a veritable diplomacy has to be exercised daily and hourly, if one would so live with an artist as to cheer him in his moments of discouragement, to stimulate him, to give him constantly the discreet and intelligent praise he needs, when it seems to him that his imagination and his powers are forsaking him, and that he is no longer doing his best work. An artist is a piece of machinery

that must be wound up every day. There is scarce an artist worthy of the name who does not think he is used up each time that he terminates a new work, and there is not a painter who, when he shows a new picture for the first time, does not watch the scrutinizing gaze of the critic, much as a mother watches with anxious eye the expression of the doctor who is going to pronounce himself upon the subject of her sick child. An artist is a child, who must be constantly petted and applauded.

Dora knew all that, and on this subject she had nothing to reproach herself with; on the contrary, it was to her that her husband owed his growing celebrity—she had made him what he was. She did not take any credit for this, she had never reminded him of it, never a hint on the subject had passed her lips. A woman like Dora leaves a husband to recognize these things for himself, but never speaks of them.

Dora had not the courage to ask Philip why he painted with less ardor, but she longed to say to him, "You promised me that you would finish the portrait to-day; you tell me that it is only a matter of two or three hours' work; but I am sure that it will take seven or eight hours to finish it . . . why don't you set about it?" And her imagination fell to inventing all sorts of explanations, each more fantastic and improbable than the other.

The last words of Monsieur de Lussac came back to her memory, "*Pansies for thought—Love*

lies bleeding." What connection would there be between a pansy and a crushed love? No one had ever loved her well enough to break his heart about her, except Philip, and he had married her. But he? Had there been a romance in his life before she had known him? He had never spoken of anything of the kind. "After all," she said to herself, "the best of men have some experience of that kind in their early life, which they do not talk about. Ah, well! what matters it? Philip has filled my life with happiness."

Her glance wandered again to the picture. "Not yet finished," she murmured. "Has he forgotten his promise? For some time past he has been quite strange; he seems preoccupied, distraught, anxious even—at times his mind seems to be far away." And a thousand ideas flitted through her mind, only to be dismissed as all equally absurd.

Suddenly she uttered a little cry of surprise, to find the vigorous arms of her husband clasped around her waist.

"What is my little wife thinking of so deeply that she does not notice the sound of her husband's footsteps?" said Philip.

"Of you," said Dora, laughing, "and of these flowers."

"They have come again, eh?" said Philip, taking up his palette and brushes.

"Yes, who sends them?"

"That is what I should like to know. As I told you before, an old admirer of yours, I dare say."

"Nonsense, you know better. As I said before, some old sweetheart of yours—far more likely," replied Dora.

Then looking her husband straight in the eyes, she added:

"Confess."

"Look here," said Philip, "I have come to work; if you tease me in this way, I shall never do anything."

He tried his brushes and began mixing his colors.

Dora took the little bunch of pansies which she had arranged, and placed them near the portrait.

"The colors harmonize exquisitely with the yellow of the dress. How sweet they are, these pansies! Look, do look, at this dear little yellow one—what a saucy face! Put it in the picture. By-the-bye, there is a letter for you."

She went to the table, where Hobbs had laid the letter, took it up and read the envelope aloud, "Philip Grantham, Esq., A.R.A. Associate of the Royal Academy! There are lots of people who live in hopes of adding letters to their name, but you, my Philip, will soon drop one: instead of A.R.A., just Royal Academician, R.A."

"Who knows?" said Philip. "Perhaps—thanks to your encouragement and loving praise. There! open the letter for me, will you?"

"It is Sir Benjamin Pond, who announces that he is coming to see you to-day: he wants to choose one or two pictures."

"I hope he will come late, then," said Philip,

"I want to finish your portrait before dinner. It ought to be easy enough—two or three hours of steady work, and the thing is done."

Dora smiled a little smile of incredulity.

"Seven or eight," said she, "at least."

Philip had stuck the bunch of pansies on the easel, his palette was ready, he was just going to begin.

"Come here," said he to Dora, "here, quite close—that's it. I can work so much better, darling, when you are near me. Look, the brush works already more easily, my hand is surer—there, that is good—splendid—I shall go ahead now."

Philip was in working mood, and Dora was beaming. She could have hugged him, and would not have been able to resist the temptation, but for the fear of hindering his progress. After a few minutes' silence, she burst out:

"Philip!"

"Yes, dearest," replied Philip, without withdrawing his eyes from his work.

"Don't you think ours is a very romantic life?"

"Very romantic? How do you mean?"

"Oh, I mean that we are so happy."

"Yes, but that is hardly what people call romance. A romantic life is an eventful life, and happy people have no events in their lives. I don't believe that cousin Gerald Lorimer, with all his imagination, could get a one-act play out of our lives. There is no plot to be found in them.

To make a novel or a play, there must be intrigue, troubles, misunderstandings, moral storms. There are people who love storms. Some people only love the sea when it is in a fury. Are you fond of storms yourself?"

"Oh no," replied Dora; "I have no sea-legs, I love the life that I lead with you—and my enthusiasm for your art deepens my love for you every day."

"My darling," said Philip, drawing Dora still nearer to him, and caressing the graceful head that was resting against his knee, "do you know that one of these days I shall be jealous of you, you are making such progress with your painting."

"What nonsense! I am learning so that I may understand you better. To appreciate you thoroughly, my ambition soars no higher than that."

Philip looked at his watch, turned towards the door that led to the street, and made a little gesture of impatience that did not escape Dora.

"Philip," said she, "what are you thinking of?"

"Why, of you, dear, always you."

"No, you were not thinking about me just now. You cannot deceive me," said she, coaxingly. "Do you know that, of late, I have observed a little change in you—oh! just a little change."

"A change? What a little goose you are!"

"Oh, I am not so silly as all that; the fact is you seem absent-minded lately, anxious, irritable even; and, worse than all that, this morning you

had forgotten it was the anniversary of our wedding. Now, had you not?"

Philip started.

"Oh, but I am quite sure of what I am saying. I am certain you had forgotten."

"What nonsense! it is all in your imagination, my dear child."

"No, it is not," said Dora, with great emphasis; "a woman's intuition is often a safer guide than her eyes."

"Your intuition, then, for once is wrong."

"Come, come," said Dora, tenderly, "tell me, have you any troubles, any little worry?"

"No, dear, none," said Philip, frowning a little. "Let me get on with my work, and don't ask silly questions."

"Oh, very well," said Dora, pouting.

She rose, and went away from the easel a few steps; but noticing that Philip was looking at her, as if to ask her forgiveness for having been a trifle abrupt, she turned her steps towards him, and, laying her head on his shoulder, burst into tears; then looking him in the face, with eyes that were smiling through the tears, she cried, "Oh, do tell me what ails you."

"What a child you are, dearest! I assure you, there is nothing the matter."

"I know better."

"You will have to believe me," said Philip, in a not very convincing tone, but doing his best to comfort her with his look, "when I tell you, that there is absolutely nothing wrong, although—"

"Although? Ah!" cried Dora, "you see that I was right after all. Well?"

And she eagerly waited to hear the explanation that should put an end to all her conjectures.

"Well, then, yes," said Philip, resolutely, "there is something. Sometimes I feel I should like to do so much more for you than I have been able."

"What an idea! There is not a woman in the world with whom I should like to change places. How could I be happier than I am?"

"What is your definition of happiness?" said Philip, continuing to paint.

"For a woman," replied Dora, with warmth, "happiness consists in being loved by the man whom she loves and can be proud of; in being rich enough to afford all the necessary comforts of life, and poor enough to make pulling together a necessity; an existence hand in hand, side by side. And what is yours?"

"Well, I confess, I should like to be a little richer than that," said Philip, with a little amused smile.

"Ah! I see," exclaimed Dora, sadly, "you are beginning to grow tired of this quiet life of ours. Take care, Philip, noise frightens happiness away. Happy the house that is hidden in the trees, as the nest in the thick of the hedges."

"My dear child, we have to live for the world a little."

"Excuse me if I do not understand you," said Dora, "I am only a woman. I can live for you, and for you alone. I know that love is not sufficient even for the most devoted and affectionate

of husbands. A woman can live on love and die of it. That's the difference. Now, what is your definition of happiness?"

"To be blessed with a dear, adorable wife; to have money enough to enable me to surround her with every luxury. Yes, I long to be really rich, if only to make my father repent of his treatment of me. In his eyes a man is successful according to his proven ability to pile up money. Ah, that letter of his, how it rankles in my mind still and always will!"

"What letter is that?" said Dora; "you never spoke to me of it before. Why, what a tomb of dark secrets you are!"

Philip rose, went to a drawer, took out a letter, and returned with it in his hand.

"Here it is," he said, "listen:

"'My Son,—When I opened to you the doors of the banking-house which I have founded, and bade you join me as a clerk who would eventually be master of it, I did not doubt that you had sufficient good sense and filial docility to make you joyfully accept such an opening. It appears that you have neither of these qualities. Twice I have made the offer, twice you have declined it. From this day please to consider yourself free to follow art or any other road to starvation. I relinquish all right to direct your career, but I also require you to relinquish all right to call yourself the son of

"'Thomas Grantham.'"

Philip folded the letter and replaced it in the drawer.

"Yes," said Dora, "it was a cruel letter, for, after all, your only crime had been to wish to become an artist. And yet, a father knows that out of a hundred men who take up painting as a profession, one or two perhaps get to the top of the tree. Where is the father who would advise his son to work at art, music, or literature for a livelihood? In the case of a real vocation, he may bow gracefully to the inevitable, but, as a rule, a parent does not bring up his sons with a view to making artists of them. On the contrary, he does what he can to dissuade them from choosing that course. In the case of your father, my dear Philip, I think one might allow extenuating circumstances. Where is the head of the family who would not dread for his sons these often illiberal professions? Professions, which ninety-nine times out of a hundred bring in little besides disappointments, disillusions, a miserable pittance, and often despair? Try and forget this grievance, darling. In any case, you have had your revenge already. You are celebrated, and we are no longer poor."

"Ah, but we have been, and it has sometimes brought tears of rage to my eyes, and to-day we are a long, a very long way, from being rich."

"Ah, but think what an enviable lot yours is!" said Dora, proudly. "Yours is the most honorable of callings. You have no poor wretches sweating for you. Your income is the fruit of

your personal handiwork. You are your own master. You help to make life beautiful. You have a fame increasing every day. You enjoy the respect of everybody, the admiration of the public, the appreciation of the best critics, the company and the friendship of all the intelligence of London. A king might well envy the life of a great artist!"

Dora was excited, and Philip looked at her with eyes that thanked her for all she thought of him.

"You are quite right," he resumed, "and I am far from complaining of my fate. I have also full confidence in the future. But you, my darling; it is of you I am thinking."

"Of me?" exclaimed Dora. "But do I not share all your honors? What more can I wish for? Why, my dear boy," she added, laughing, "before ten years have passed you will be knighted, and I run the risk of being one day Lady Grantham. Just fancy?" And she drew herself up most comically.

They both burst out laughing. Philip was in a confessing mood, and he went on.

"I should like," he said, "to see you the mistress of such a house as you were brought up in!"

"Good heavens! It is all I can do to keep this dear little one properly! Besides, where is it now —that beautiful house where I was brought up? After my mother's death, my father took to speculating, and he died penniless. Everything had

to be sold to pay his debts. Much better begin as we do than finish as he did."

"I should like," continued Philip, in the same strain, "to see you drive in a handsome carriage of your own."

"A hansom cab," replied Dora, laughing, "is much more convenient, goes faster, costs less, and gives you much less trouble."

"I should like to see *rivières* of diamonds on your lovely neck, precious stones on your fingers."

Dora looked serious, almost sad.

"I wish no better collar for my neck than your true, manly arms—my Philip! On my fingers? Do you see this little ring?"

"A five-pound ring!" said Philip, with an air of contempt. "I am almost ashamed to see it on your finger."

"A five-pound ring!" exclaimed Dora, "a priceless ring! Do you remember—ah, I do!—how for many weeks you put away ten shillings a week so as to be able to buy it for me on my birthday! A five-pound ring, indeed! Not for the Koh-i-nûr would I exchange it," she added, as she kissed the little ring passionately. "To me the real value of a jewel is the love it represents in the giver, and no rich gems could be richer in that sense than this dear little ring."

Philip felt deeply moved and almost humiliated. He tenderly kissed Dora, and resumed painting. Dora thought she was gaining her cause, and went on pleading:

"Ah, Philip," she said, "the rich don't know the pleasures they miss, the sweetest pleasures of poverty. Their gifts cost them no sacrifice. They don't possess their wealth, it is their wealth that possesses them. They have not the satisfaction of knowing that they are loved for their own sake. I would not give one year of my life for ten years of a millionaire's life. Why, they don't even have the proof that they are honest. They have no temptations. I would shudder at the idea that I might be rich one day."

"Well," said Philip, sarcastically, "I think I could bear it with fortitude. My darling, the philosophers of all ages have taught that money does not make happiness; but sensible men of all times have come to the conclusion that it considerably helps to make it. I want money for no sordid reason. Money is round, it was meant to roll, and I mean to enjoy it."

"No, dear," replied Dora, reproachfully and pathetically, "money is flat, it was meant to stop and be piled up a little. And, by-the-way, do you know that you have made over a thousand pounds this year, and that we have kept very nearly half of it? You see, I am of some use after all. The financial position is good, since the Chancellor of the Exchequer has only spent half his budget. We are rich, since we don't want all we have."

"Yes, you are a dear, lovely little housewife," said Philip, rather coldly and without raising his eyes from the canvas.

Dora was susceptible. She felt a little wounded.

"Am I?" she said. "Perhaps you will say I am a good little *bourgeoise*. Possibly! But I will tell you this: happy as I am now, I am not sure that I was not happier still when we were quite poor, pulling, struggling together, hand in hand. I have never dreaded poverty; on the contrary, I have enjoyed it, loved it by your side. To poverty I owe the happiest days of my life. Do you remember, for instance, how we enjoyed the play when, once a month, obscure, unknown to everybody, we went to the upper circle? Wasn't it lovely? And how we often yawn now, once a week, in the stalls."

"Yes," said Philip, "and how we made the dinner shorter, so as to be able to afford the price of two seats in that upper circle?"

"Right, and that's why we enjoyed the play so much. We were not overfed in those days."

"We were not," seconded Philip.

"You cannot enjoy, even appreciate anything intellectual after a dinner of six or eight courses; you are only fit for a pantomime or a music hall. And that's why those pathetic forms of entertainment are so successful now. Why, look at the people in the boxes—indifferent, half sulky, lifting their eyebrows and staring their eyes out—like that—awful!"

"Yes," said Philip, "all the response, all the appreciation, all the warmth comes from the pit and gallery."

"And do you also remember when, two years after we were married, our *general* suddenly gave notice, and left us alone to manage housekeeping as best we could while Hobbs was temporarily absent? And how I cooked all the meals, and how you never enjoyed them better? Now, say it's true."

"Perfectly true. And I peeled the potatoes."

"The less you speak of that, the better. You wasted half of them. But what fun! The house was gay, happy, ringing with our laughter all day long; so much so that, in a month, baby put on six pounds of flesh."

"And how I cleaned the knives!" said Philip, who was enjoying the reminiscences.

"Which helped your appetite for breakfast."

"And the boots—now, I did not like cleaning the boots."

"Yes, you did, and they never shone so beautifully."

"Well, I flatter myself I was able to make myself useful."

"Those were and will always be the dear old days of my life."

"And how pretty you looked," said Philip, "with a white apron on, and your sleeves tucked up, showing your lovely arms."

"Ah!" said Dora, "and do you also remember how you were once turned out of the kitchen for kissing the cook? You were sorry when I got a new servant."

"Upon my word, I believe I was."

"Ah!" exclaimed Dora, "you will never picnic

like that again, you will never have such lovely times. My dear Philip, the very rich people must lead very dull lives. We look for happiness far ahead of us, when often we have it close at hand. The poet is right: 'Paradise is cheap enough, it's only the hells we make for ourselves that are expensive.' We **are** as rich now as we should ever wish to be. And, let me tell you, that if ever we get really rich (that will be through your fault), I shall find my consolation in the constant recollection of all the pleasures I enjoyed when I was poor—as the ear remains forever under the charm of some sweet old melody that once struck it. I could go on forever on this theme. Now, do you know the holiday of my life that I shall never forget?"

"Our trip to Paris with ten pounds in our pockets," replied Philip.

"That's not fair; you guess too quickly. Well, didn't we do it after all? We saw everything—the museums, the theatres, the gardens, and when we arrived home—"

"We had to borrow one-and-six from the servant to pay the cab fare from Charing Cross."

"Lovely!" cried Dora, clapping her hands with joy. "What fun we had—real, good, wholesome fun! Now, look at our little girl. She will hardly look at the beautiful dolls she has. She always goes back to the old stuffed stocking, with a face painted on the ball of cotton that does duty for a head. Now, why? Tell me why she prefers it to all the others."

"Oh, probably because she can ill-use it to her heart's content."

"Not a bit of it; because it reminds her of the happiest, the jolliest days of her life. The pleasures of poverty again, my dear Philip, the sweetest, the never-to-be-forgotten ones—alas, never to be enjoyed again, perhaps!"

"I will see that they are not," said Philip.

"Oh, Philip, tell me that you are happy now, that the ambition of your life will be your work, your art, not money."

"Certainly, darling. But, let me tell you also, honestly, that the greatest pleasure in connection with my days of poverty—"

"Well?"

"Is that I am poor no longer."

"You incorrigible cynic."

Dora looked at Philip for some moments.

"Oh, Philip," she cried, "say that you are only teasing me, that you don't mean a word of it."

"Yes, dear, I am only teasing you," said Philip, indifferently. "Now, little wife, you must be quiet and let me work, or this portrait will never be finished to-day."

Philip looked at the clock, then at his watch. It was half-past one. A ring was heard at the studio door. He shivered with excitement. "It is perhaps de Lussac," he said to himself.

"I hope it is not that bothering Sir Benjamin coming to disturb me," he said to Dora.

Gerald Lorimer, for whom there was always a cover laid at Philip's table, entered the studio.

"Why, it's Lorimer," exclaimed Philip, rising, and going to shake hands with his friend. "I am as hungry as a hound; I'll go and wash my hands, and we'll have lunch at once."

"Well, and how goes the portrait?" said Lorimer.

"My dear fellow," replied Philip, "I shall have to take a studio a mile or two off, so that my wife will not be able to come and chatter and hinder me from working. Look at it: here have I been for the past two hours in front of this easel, and done half an hour's painting at most."

Philip ran up-stairs to wash and change his coat, and quickly rejoined Dora and Lorimer in the dining-room.

V

THE DRAMATIC AUTHOR AND THE PATRON OF ARTS

GERALD LORIMER, although still quite young, was already a dramatist of some note. He was gayety and *insouciance* personified. A genial philosopher, witty, sometimes a cynic, but always a kindly one, indulgent to the shortcomings of humanity, he looked at life as a comedy, which he witnessed from the most comfortable of orchestra stalls. The world amused him and supplied him with types for study. He enjoyed robust health, the joy of living was written all over his face, and, wherever he went, he brought an atmosphere of contagious, irresistible gayety. He was a handsome man, distinguished-looking, and fairly well off. When asked why he did not marry, he answered, "Thanks, I prefer to study from afar; one observes better at a distance."

He had a little house in Philip's neighborhood that was the envy of all who were privileged to enter its doors. Women thought it impudence of a man to dare to instal himself thus, and so prove *urbi et orbi* that it is not absolutely necessary to have a woman under one's roof to enjoy the most perfect comfort. And yet, when

asked why Lorimer did not marry, all that women had to say was, "No inclination, I suppose."

Women adore parties given by bachelors. They went in crowds when Lorimer asked them to an "At home" or a garden-party. They took free advantage of the permission he gave them to wander over the house, and examined all its corners. Every bachelor's house interests women and arouses their curiosity. They pried into every nook and cranny, in the hope of bringing to light a mystery, perchance some woman's portrait—Heaven knows what, perhaps a hairpin on the carpet. Wherever they looked, everything was ease, comfort, and liberty; and they arrived at the conclusion that one may be a bachelor and yet live happily, but consoled themselves with the thought that nobody has found the way to live a bachelor and die happily. Lorimer's house was arranged with taste, in the Oriental style. The drawing-room, dining-room, library, and smoking-room formed a delightful suite of rooms.

"You see," said some woman, "nothing but men-servants—a French cook, a German valet: our host must be a woman-hater."

"I do not see that that follows, dear," said another one; "men are more discreet and less gossipping than women, and I warrant that this house has been the scene of many an interesting little tête-à-tête."

Each one had her own opinion; none of them really knew anything about it. Lorimer had never given any one occasion to gossip about him; he

was English and a gentleman, therefore discreet. The French boast often of things they have never done; the English never boast of what they do. The latter are right. Besides, a bachelor, in giving his house a reputation of perfect respectability, can thus invite to it not only his friends but their wives and daughters.

Lorimer knew all London: the club world, the aristocratic world, the artistic world of Chelsea and St. John's Wood; and at his parties duchesses, actresses, cabinet ministers, painters, writers, actors, and jounalists jostled one another.

A friend of men, because of his good-fellowship, frankness, and loyalty; and of women, by reason of his wit, his discretion, and his charming manners, Lorimer was received everywhere with open arms. He could have dined and lunched out every day, if this had been the programme of his existence. On the contrary, he worked hard, went out little, knew everybody, but was the intimate acquaintance of but few, and among these were numbered Philip and Dora, whom he liked exceedingly and who interested him intensely.

They sat down in merry mood and did honor to the simple and appetizing lunch.

"What a pity you did not turn up a few moments earlier, my dear fellow!" said Philip to Lorimer. "You would have been edified, and have heard Dora holding forth against wealth. The contempt my wife has for money is sublime. She is of the opinion that art, like virtue, should be its own reward."

"I'm sorry to say it's often the only one art gets," said Lorimer. "Well, what's your news?"

"Haven't any," said Philip. "Oh yes, though," added he, "Sir Benjamin Pond threatens to pay us a visit to-day—deuce take him."

"You're in luck; he spends a mint of money in pictures."

"They say he buys them by the dozen."

"Hum," said Lorimer, "by the square yard. He's an awful ass, but his money is as good as that of the cleverest. When I said just now, 'What's your news?' I meant from the workshop."

"My wife's portrait will be finished in an hour's time; you shall see it after lunch."

"And what will you call it?"

"Oh, simply, 'Portrait of Mrs. Grantham,' or, perhaps, 'A Bunch of Pansies.'"

"'A Bunch of Pansies,' that's charming," said Lorimer; "I should like to have a title like that for my new play, as simple—"

"Oh, by the bye, how about your play, is it getting on?"

"It's finished, my dear fellow. I have the manuscript with me. I have to read it to the company at the Queen's Theatre to-day at four o'clock."

"Are you pleased with it?"

"My dear friend, when a man has the artistic temperament, his work never realizes his ideal—but, thank goodness, when I have finished a play, I think of nothing but—the next one."

"You are right—but, still, with your experience —you have been writing plays for years."

"I wrote my first play when I was seventeen," said Lorimer, drawing himself up in a comic manner.

"When you were seventeen?" exclaimed Dora.

"Yes! a melodrama, and what a melodrama it was!—blood-curdling, weird, terrible, human, fiendish. I portrayed crime, perfidy, and lying triumphing for a while, but overtaken in the long run by fatal chastisement."

"And was the piece produced?" interrupted Dora.

"It was read," answered Lorimer. "I received a very encouraging letter from the manager of the theatre. My play, it appeared, showed a deplorable ignorance of stagecraft, but was well written and full of fine and well-conceived situations. However, horrors followed one another so closely that it was to be feared that the audience would scarcely have time to draw breath and dry their tears. Finally, the letter terminated with a piece of good advice. This was, in the future, not to kill all my *dramatis personæ*, so that, at the fall of the curtain, there might be some one left alive to announce the name of the author and bring him forward!"

"It was most encouraging," said Dora, in fits of laughter.

"That is not all," added Lorimer; "I received, a month later, an invitation to a dinner given by the Society of Dramatic Authors, and found

myself among the leading authors and actors of the day."

"You must have been proud," said Dora.

"Proud, my dear madam," said Lorimer; "if you would form an idea of what I felt, try to imagine a little shepherd of Bœotia asked to dine with Jupiter, to meet all the gods of Olympus."

"Now, come, tell us about your new play," said Philip.

"Oh, well, you know, I hope it will be a success, but you never know what will please the great B.P. The dialogue is good, the characters are interesting, the situations are strong without being vulgar, the idea is new—yes, I must say, I am sanguine."

"Bravo," said Philip, "the theme is original."

"Perfectly original," said Lorimer. "I don't adapt Parisian plays for the *Pharisian* stage."

"It must be enchanting," cried Dora, "to see one's own creations in flesh and blood—alive!"

"Yes, for one month, two months, six months perhaps. The creations of painters last for centuries."

"That is true," said Dora, looking at Philip.

"Shakespeare and Molière are still being played with success," said Philip.

"Yes, I grant you those two. Human nature is still and always will be what it was in their time. There are no new passions, follies to portray since their time; but against those two names which you cite—real demi-gods—I could

give you two hundred painters and sculptors dating from antiquity down to the present day."

Dora was delighted with the turn the conversation had taken. It seemed to her that Philip no longer enthused over his art, and she tried her utmost to rekindle the sacred fire that threatened to go out. So, encouraging Lorimer to continue in the same strain, she said:

"Yes, you are right. It is painting that expresses all that is beautiful in the world."

"Especially Philip's art," said Lorimer, seeming to grasp Dora's meaning from the warmth with which she spoke. "You paint nature, my dear friend, flowers, portraits—you do not inflict the nude upon us, as do so many of your brothers in art, who show themselves but poor imitators of the French school, *servum pecus*."

"But nature is surely always beautiful, wherever she is found," said Dora.

"The ideal, yes," said Lorimer, "but it is the realistic method of treatment, in most pictures, that displeases me. Perhaps I am a little puritanical; but what can you expect? I'm English!"

"But there is no ideal nature, there is only true nature," said Dora. "Call it realism, if you wish: what is real is true, and what is true is beautiful."

"My dear Lorimer," exclaimed Philip, "if you are going to argue out that subject with Dora, you are lost, I warn you. You will get the worst of it."

"Well, you will admit this much, I suppose," said Dora, "that the models chosen are generally beautiful. English models are even more than beautiful, they are mostly pure in form."

"Quite so, but no artist has a right to expose a woman's nude figure to the public gaze. In sculpture it may be permissible—the cold purity of the marble saves everything—but never in painting."

"Shake up the Englishman," said Dora, laughing, "and the Puritan rises to the surface. I thought you were artistic, my dear friend. One may forgive a Puritan, but a *pruritan*, excuse the word, oh!—I have met people who only saw in the *Venus de Milo* a woman with no clothes on. Poor Venus! I wish she could grow a pair of arms and hands to box the ears of such Philistines. Of course, I must say, these people were not of our society."

"Well, call me prejudiced if you will; but I hate to see woman robbed of her modesty—and of her clothes—for the edification of a profane public, especially a public as inartistic as our English one. Your remark about the *Venus de Milo* proves that I am right. In France it is another matter. The public understands. It knows that such and such a picture is beautiful, and why it is beautiful. Even the workmen over there have been visitors of picture galleries from generation to generation, and I have heard some, at the Louvre and the Luxembourg, making criticisms of pictures that they looked at, criticisms

which proved to me that they had more true appreciation of painting than the fashionable crowd that goes to the Royal Academy on private view day. No, I say, the nude in France, if you will; but in England, Heaven preserve us from it!"

"And yet," said Dora, in a calmer tone of voice, "the novelists and dramatists of to-day, for the most part, do exactly the same thing."

"What do you mean to say? Novelists and dramatists describe the emotions, the passions of the soul. To uncover the heart and uncover the body are two vastly different things. Add to that, in England on the stage, if not in the novel, that virtue triumphs invariably."

"Yes, but at what cost? Firstly, often at the expense of insulting one's common-sense; but that is the fault of a public that insists on being sent home perfectly convinced that the hero and heroine still henceforth live happily ever after. That is not the worst of it. Before seeing the triumph of virtue, often an impossible kind of virtue, one must assist at the heartrending dissection of a woman's soul. All the deformities of her heart are laid bare. I suppose you call that realism too, I call it clinical surgery—that is to say, my dear friend, that modern fiction exhales a strong odor of carbolic acid. Ah, I must say I prefer a picture, in which a woman is presented in all her beauty of form and color, to a novel or a play, in which we see woman represented as impure, corrupted—"

"I told you that you would be beaten, Lorimer. Own yourself vanquished."

"My dear madam," said Lorimer, "you preach to a convert. But I must remind you that converting the British public is not my rôle. I serve up to that worthy public, which has always been kind to me, the dish of its predilection. We cannot always put on the stage Pauls and Virginias, who, moreover, are getting rarer every day, as you will admit."

"Virginias, especially," said Philip, in parenthesis.

"Oh, that's another thing," exclaimed Dora, almost indignantly; "you work, you turn out dramatic literature, for what it brings you in; own it at once—to make money! That is modern art, the art of making ten thousand a year. Some are writers, some are green-grocers; you put them all in the same category. Under these conditions, I do not see why Philip should not accept offers to paint advertisements for manufacturers of soaps and hair restorers."

"But, my dear friend," said Lorimer, "some of our greatest academicians have accepted such commissions with the most satisfactory results."

"Oh, hold your tongue, you are incorrigible!" said Dora, laughing.

Philip saw that it was time to put a stop to the conversation that threatened to get too heated, and proposed a smoke in the studio. Dora did not go with them; she made a solemn bow to Lorimer; and all three burst out laughing and separated the best of friends.

Philip and Lorimer lit their cigars, the latter without taking his eyes off the portrait of Dora, which he thought a splendid likeness and perfect in coloring and modelling.

"Ah, my dear friend, what a wife you have! What a companion for an artist! Upon my word, if I were married to such a woman, I believe I could write masterpieces."

Philip hardly heeded him. He paced up and down the studio, looking at the clock, then at the door, and starting at every sound he heard in the street.

"I should like to gain the world, to lay it at the feet of this woman," said he, standing before the portrait a moment. Philip felt more and more agitated. Lorimer looked at him fixedly.

"Why, old fellow, what on earth is the matter with you?"

"My dear Lorimer," answered Philip, who could conceal his feelings no longer, "you see me to-day in an indescribable state of excitement. In a few moments I may hear that I am a rich man."

"You don't say so," said Lorimer, amazed; "an old uncle about to depart this life?"

"No," said Philip, "my work, my very own work, is perhaps on the point of making me wealthy. For months past, night and day, so to speak, I have been working—"

"At a great picture," interrupted Lorimer.

"At an invention."

"Nonsense; take care. You will die in the workhouse."

"Not at all, old fellow," said Philip.; "there are two kinds of inventors, those who seek and those who discover. I have discovered."

"What have you discovered, dear friend?" said Lorimer, more and more surprised.

"A shell that may revolutionize the art of warfare. A Special Commission is now sitting at the War Office in Paris, to discuss its merits. I am awaiting their decision. I shall get a telegram to-day, perhaps in a few moments. I offered my shell to the English Government, but they declined it."

"Are you speaking seriously?"

"Do I look as if I were joking? Can't you see, man, I'm in a fever of impatience, that I can't hold a brush, my hand is trembling so. I have neither the courage nor the strength to finish this portrait, which only requires about an hour's work. But not a word to Dora on the subject; she knows nothing about it yet, and never will, if the affair falls through."

A violent ringing was heard at the studio bell.

"There," said Philip, "that is it perhaps—the telegram at last." And he ran to open the door himself.

He returned accompanied by a big man, pompous and shiny, who entered the studio with a majestic step. Bald, chubby-faced, with a huge nose that divided his face in two, as the Appenines divide Italy, and two large round eyes, set lobster fashion, he was, with his huge white waistcoat, a fair example of a certain type of city merchant, in

all his glory. This pretentious personage cast a look into every corner of the studio.

"Plague take the bore," said Philip to Lorimer.

"I'll be off," said Lorimer.

"Oh no, please stay. Sir Benjamin Pond's visit won't last long."

"Ah, ah," said the big city alderman; "you received my note, in which I announced my visit?"

Philip made a sign in the affirmative. Sir Benjamin placed his hat on a table and, rubbing his hands, threw a condescending glance at Philip, which seemed to say, "You ought to be proud to have a visit from me." He took stock of the furniture in detail.

"Very cosey here; very comfortable quarters indeed. You are evidently doing well. One is constantly hearing of artists who live on buns in garrets — upon my word, I don't know any such inviting and attractive houses as those inhabited by artists, and I flatter myself I know them all."

"Painters surround themselves with a certain artistic luxury, as a means of inspiration," said Philip; "and then, Sir Benjamin," added he, laughing, "I don't see why all the good things of this life should be for the fools. Pray, take a seat."

"Thanks," said the patron of arts. "I came—"

"To arrange for a portrait?"

"No, no, not a portrait. Now I hope I sha'n't offend you by saying so, but I really don't care for portaits in oil. You may say what you like,

but, to have a perfect likeness, give me a good colored photograph. That's my tackle. For fancy portraits, very good, but otherwise—"

"It sounds promising," thought Lorimer, who took up his position near the window, to enjoy the fun.

"The moment a process is discovered for photographing color as well as lines and shade," continued Sir Benjamin, "nobody will want a painted portrait. For a portrait you don't want imagination, you want truth, sir, real truth, an exact reproduction of the original."

"Some people prefer Madame Tussaud's Exhibition to the Louvre or the British Museum," said Lorimer.

The city alderman turned round and looked at him, and Philip introduced them to each other.

"Sir Benjamin Pond—Mr. Gerald Lorimer, our well-known playright; no doubt you know him by reputation."

"Delighted to make your acquaintance," said Pond, shaking hands with Lorimer. "I see by the papers that you are going to give us a new play. When I was a young man I wrote several plays myself, but I thought better of it, and, like a good Briton, I preferred to be useful to my country and go into business. No offence, I hope," added he, bursting into loud guffaws.

"How long is this ass going to stay here boring us, I wonder?" murmured Philip.

"But to return to the object of my visit," said

Sir Benjamin. "A few days ago my daughter got married, and, among other presents, I gave her the choice of two pictures in my gallery. It has left two empty spaces on my wall, one 18 by 24, another 36 by 50. Now, what have you got that would fill them?"

"Framed or unframed?" said Philip, who by this time was beginning to thoroughly enjoy the situation.

"Bless me, framed, of course," said Sir Benjamin.

"I asked the question merely to form an idea of the size of the canvas."

"Do you think you have what I want? Some pictures that you have finished lately. If they are a trifle smaller, it won't matter much. I like wide frames, they show their value better; and no picture ever suffered from a good-sized frame. I have all my frames made at Denis's—only the French know how to frame pictures and bind books."

"A sensible remark," said Lorimer to himself.

"I am afraid I have nothing to suit you," said Philip, in the tone of a bootmaker who has not the right-sized shoes for his customer.

The alderman took a rule out of his pocket, and measured several canvases that Philip placed on Dora's easel, after having removed the copy that she was doing of her own portrait.

"Too small—too small again—oh, much too small. By George, what a pity!"

"Perhaps you could put two of those in the

larger space, Sir Benjamin," suggested Lorimer, with a wink at Philip, and without losing that British calm which is the strong point of the Englishman in critical situations.

"Two! oh, dear, no, that would look patchy. I am very proud of my gallery, sir— Come and see it some day. There is hardly a good modern painter that isn't represented there. My philanthropy consists in patronizing the arts, and especially modern artists. In buying old pictures you put money in the pockets of collectors and dealers, whereas, in buying pictures from living painters, you put money in the pockets of the artists. Now, don't you think I'm right?"

Philip and Lorimer recognized that this was indeed the best manner of appreciating modern art.

"And so you have nothing?" continued Sir Benjamin. "One 18 by 24, and one 36 by 50," he repeated.

"My work is either too small or too large, I fear. I could, within a month or six weeks, fill your 18 by 24."

"No, no, I can't wait. Those open spaces, staring me in the face, are too awful."

"I am extremely sorry," said Philip.

"So am I," replied Sir Benjamin. "I wanted a picture of yours; I like variety in my gallery."

"And no doubt he has it," thought Lorimer.

"Mr. Grantham," continued the city man, "you have a great career before you. Everybody says so. You'll be an academician before five years are over; you are one of our future great painters."

He gazed around the studio once more, and suddenly noticing the portrait of Dora, he said, "Hello! what's this?" and proceeded to measure the picture.

"Why, this is the very thing. I'll take this. I don't know the original, but she's a deuced pretty woman, and if it's a fancy portrait—"

"It is not quite finished yet."

"Yes, that's true," said Sir Benjamin; "I see the face and hands want a little—"

"No, the flowers," interrupted Philip; "but it will be finished to-day."

"Good, send it to me to-morrow."

"Sir Benjamin, this picture was painted under exceptional circumstances. I mean—"

"That's all right, my dear sir; your price is mine. That is my way of doing business. When I have taken a fancy to a picture, I never bargain with the artist."

"You misunderstand me, Sir Benjamin," returned Philip; "I simply meant to say that this picture is not for sale. It is a portrait of my wife, and belongs to her."

"Oh, that's another matter. In that case, I'll say nothing more."

"I hope to be more fortunate some other time."

"So do I. Well, good-day, good-day," said Sir Benjamin, as Philip handed him his hat. "Very pleased to have made your acquaintance. I will let you know, as soon as another—"

"Vacancy occurs," suggested Lorimer.

"That's it, that's it. Good-bye."

Philip would have liked to give him a kick as well as his hat. He accompanied the alderman to the door, and, returning to the studio, found Lorimer holding his sides with laughter.

"Those people are the drawbacks of my profession, old man. They are enough to disgust you with it all. Great heavens, what a fool!"

"I don't know about that; they buy pictures and pay cash down. One may safely say that but for the good, inartistic British middle class, the fine arts would have to put up their shutters. Our upper classes have only praise and money for foreign works. Have we not musicians by the score who have had to resort to Italian *noms de guerre* to get a hearing in this country? Yes! I must say, I admire our middle classes. If it were not for our aldermen and county councillors, who have sufficient patriotism to get their portraits done in their own country, our English portraitists would end their careers in the workhouse. And, come, you must own that he was vastly amusing, the dear man; that the imposing big-wig of the city was simply killing." And the humor of the situation striking him afresh, Lorimer rolled on the sofa with laughter, and Dora, entering the studio at that moment, discovered him in a far from dignified position, his legs cutting figures in the air.

"Oh, you've just come too late," said he, rising quickly; "he is gone."

"Who is gone?" said Dora.

"Why, the patron of the arts, Alderman Sir

Benjamin Pond." And in a few words, Lorimer described the humorous little scene that had just taken place. Then, suddenly remembering his appointment, he looked at the clock.

"By Jove! it's four o'clock! That is the time I had promised to be at the theatre. I must fly!"

"Are you off?" said Philip. "I'll go with you. I want some fresh air; I feel stifling, staying all day in this confounded studio. Don't worry, darling," said he to Dora, on seeing her look at the picture that he had begun almost to take a dislike to. "I will finish the picture when I come back. As I said, there is only an hour's work to do to it."

"Where in the name of fortune have I put my manuscript?" exclaimed Lorimer.

"Here it is on the table," said Dora. "Is there a woman with a past in it?"

"A past?" said Lorimer. "Four pasts, and fine ones, too. Quite enough to make up for all possible defects in the play. My dear Mrs. Grantham, I shall not put in an appearance here again until I have written a play with an angel in it."

"Never mind the angel," said Dora. "Have a real, true woman—that's good enough for anybody."

"Oh, well, never mind; with all her pasts, you know, this woman has a great future."

"I hope so, for your sake. Good-luck."

Philip and Lorimer got into a cab and went off, waving their hands to Dora.

VI

THE INVENTOR

PHILIP'S state of feverish agitation had not escaped Dora's notice. She had never seen him thus preoccupied and restless until to-day. It was very evident that he was hiding something from her, and that it must be something most important. What could it possibly be? Philip, hitherto always so open and confiding, had failed for the first time to unbosom himself to her. She was no longer the confidante of his worries and the dispeller of his clouds of depression. There must be something very extraordinary going on, something quite exceptional and hitherto unknown, since she had been kept in the dark concerning it. Uncertainty is the cruellest trial for the heart of a woman to endure, when that woman is resolute and brave, and feels ready to face any danger courageously. Dora knew herself to be strong and valiant enough to brave any ordinary danger, but what was the use of that while there was nothing tangible to deal with and defy? This incertitude was devouring her. "I am stifling in this wretched studio," Philip had said to her, before going out with Lorimer. Never had she

heard him speak thus of the dear retreat where they had passed so many exquisite hours together.

A kind of presentiment came over Dora that their artistic existence was about to be broken up. Their past life had been an unbroken chain of happy days; what did the future hold in store? For the first time, Dora could see only a mist of uncertainty in front of her. Up to to-day, the road had seemed clear and sunny to her happy vision, and easy to tread, but now doubt clouded her sky; she could not see ahead. The road was perhaps going to branch. Would they take right or left?

"This wretched studio" had dealt her a blow, straight at the breast. A man may be irritable, sulky, wanting in common politeness even; he may forget himself so far as to lose his temper and use violent language, if you will; but there are hallowed things that he respects in all times and seasons, in temper and out of temper, and to Dora the studio was one of these things—a temple dedicated to all that she most cherished.

"This wretched studio" signified for her much more than Philip had put into the words, for, in her brain, things began to take magnified proportions. In cursing the studio, Philip had cursed his art, and for this he had chosen a day like the present, the anniversary of their wedding, and just when he was to have finished the portrait, whose growth she had watched as a child watches, with bated breath, the growth of a house of cards, which one false touch will destroy.

For the first time in her life Dora was miserable. Her pride revolted at the thought that something mysterious was passing under their roof, and that her husband had not thought fit to take her into his confidence. It did not occur to her that a man often avoids taking his wife into his confidence rather than expose her to the risk of a disappointment by talking to her of hopes which may not be realized. Besides, there are important secrets which a man has to know how to keep to himself. A secret disclosed proves to be an indiscretion in the confiding one as often as a show of faith in the confidante. But Dora felt so sure of herself, so strong in her power of devotion, that it would never have entered her head that Philip could not repose entire confidence in her.

When little Eva returned from a walk, about half-past four, accompanied by Hobbs, she found her mother in tears, half-lying on the sofa, her face hidden in her hands.

Eva had never seen her mother weep before. The effect upon the child was terrible.

"Mamma, what is the matter?" cried Eva; and she burst into violent tears.

Quickly Dora pressed her handkerchief over her eyes to dry them, and smiled at the child.

"It is nothing at all, darling; nothing, nothing." And she took her up and pressed the poor little heaving breast to her own, but the more she sought to console her, the more the child sobbed and cried. It was impossible to calm her grief; it was heartrending.

"Mamma, mamma, are we not going to be happy any more?"

Dora rocked her beloved Eva in her arms and said, with a gay laugh:

"What a little goose it is! Was there ever such a goosikins?"

Eva had hidden her face on her mother's shoulder, and dared not look up for fear of seeing the awful mysterious something that had caused the state of distress in which she had discovered her mother. Her sobs finally died down into hiccoughs, and Dora began to sing to her some songs that the child loved. Eva gazed at her mother, whose face had regained its look of serenity, and then, growing bolder, glanced around into every corner of the room. Smiling once more, after her cautious survey of her surroundings, she ensconced herself more comfortably upon Dora's knees and said:

"Weren't we stupid, mamma? There is nothing here, is there? But where can daddy be? How lazy he is to-day!"

"Yes, isn't he? Naughty father, he ought to be at work."

"When I marry," said Eva, "I shall never have a painter."

"Why?" asked Dora, whom the child's chatter always amused.

"Oh, because—I don't know—a painter is too busy always—he doesn't play with little girls. When I have a little girl, I shall play with her all day long."

Dora felt the reproach stab straight to her heart. She was on the verge of tears once more, and felt a choking lump in her throat, but she mastered the emotion.

"Then what kind of man shall you marry?" said she, with an effort at her gayest tones.

"None at all. I shall stay and live with you always; or else I shall be a nurse, like Aunt Gabrielle."

"To nurse sick people and take care of the poor who are suffering?"

"Yes," replied Eva, "and to wear a dress just like Auntie's."

"Oh, that is your reason, eh? a very good one."

Gabrielle looked her best, perhaps, in the nurse's costume which had so taken Eva's fancy. Of the purely English type, with rosy complexion, delicate features, sweet, soft eyes and fair hair, and with that mixture of modesty and assurance in her bearing which is so characteristic of the best of her countrywomen, she lent a fresh charm to the always pleasing semi-nun-like attire worn by hospital nurses. Something of that joy of living, which angels seem to stamp upon the faces of women who devote themselves to the well-being and happiness of others, and to the assuaging of pain and suffering, had fascinated her little niece. Eva felt the charm without being able to analyze it. She knew that Aunt Gabrielle would look beautiful in any dress, but thought that she was lovely in her nurse's garb.

The child had forgotten all her tears, and went

on with her prattle. It was nearly five o'clock when Philip came in, evidently in a poor humor, and muttering words that did not reach Dora's ear.

"Eva," said he, "you must go and get dressed now, there's a good child; we are going to dine a little earlier to-night, so that you may sit up to dinner with us. You know, it is a holiday to-day; it is the anniversary of the day daddy and mamma were married on—I'll warrant there will be a special pudding for the occasion."

Eva ran off, singing in her delight, and went to find Hobbs. A moment later her little silvery voice was heard at the top of the stairs, announcing to her nurse that she was to stay up to dinner with mamma and daddy.

Presently the sound of the delightful babble ceased with the closing of the nursery door.

"You have scarcely had time to go down to the theatre," said Dora.

"No," replied Philip. "Lorimer began upon his endless theories again—what a bore he is when he talks like that! I could not stand him to-day; and, besides, I thought I had better get back and go on with the portrait until dinner."

He looked at the clock and took off his coat.

"It is going to be done to-day, after all, then, that wretched portrait," said Dora, laughing and laying a stress on the word "wretched."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I see you are tired of it."

"To tell you the truth, I am dying to get it done."

He put on his velvet jacket, sat at the easel, took his palette and his brushes.

"Now, then, to work!" said he.

"It is only five o'clock," said Dora; "you have a good deal of time yet before dinner."

He mixed his colors, and was soon apparently engrossed in the pansies. He worked three-quarters of an hour without stopping. Dora had taken a book, and sat reading, a few paces from the easel.

On the stroke of six a violent ring at the bell, impatiently repeated, was heard at the door. Philip, who had heard a cab draw up outside the studio, trembled with excitement at the sound of the bell, and let fall his palette and brush.

"It is he," he cried; "it is de Lussac! no one else would ring violently like that. He has good news, he must have—yes," he shouted, wild with joy, "it is his step, I hear him."

And he ran to meet the young attaché, whose voice he recognized.

Dora had thrown her book down on the sofa, and had risen from her chair.

De Lussac came briskly into the studio, with a telegram in his hand, which he waved about his head.

"Good news! Victory!" he cried. "Hip, hip, hurrah! as you say in England—adopted unanimously, my dear fellow. The government offers you a million francs for the shell—here is the wire!"

Philip was half beside himself with joy. He

seized the telegram from the hands of the attaché, read it, re-read it, and handed it back.

Dora, mute, immobile, was standing a couple of paces off.

"Oh, Dora, dear, my dream is realized at last! For months I have worked in secret. I was so afraid of failing that I have never dared mention a word to you about this thing, but I have succeeded. I am rewarded for all my labor and agony of anxiety about my invention. This shell is bought by the French government. I am rich —rich!" he cried. "Do you hear, darling? Oh, my Dora!"

And he folded her lovingly in his arms.

Eva had come, running in at the sound of her father's shouts, which had reached her ears.

"Daddy, daddy, what is the matter?"

Philip seized the child and lifted her in the air.

"Why, the matter is that your papa is a rich man. Are you glad?"

"Oh yes, of course I am very glad," said the child, seeing her father's beaming face. "Then we are going to be happier than ever."

"Why, to be sure we are," said Philip, executing another swing of the child into the air.

Dora seemed to be stunned. She did not realize the situation, which, for that matter, could only be fully explained by Philip later on. All that the poor woman clearly understood for the moment was that in the present state of excitement in which Philip appeared to be, he would certainly not finish the portrait that day.

Philip begged de Lussac to stay and dine, and also sent a telegram to Lorimer, to tell him the great news and ask him to try and join them. He needed friends to help him bear his joy. To bear hers, Dora would have chosen to be alone with Philip.

In moments of greatest joy a woman prefers solitude with the man she loves, and Dora was vexed that Philip should invite de Lussac and Lorimer to pass this evening with him.

The two sexes will probably never understand each other.

It may possibly be that each one judges the other by its own.

VII

THE NEW HOUSE

To Dora the vow that she had taken on her wedding-day was a sacred thing. As he knelt at her side in church, Philip had murmured low in her ear: "Before God and man I love you." This had sufficed her, and, following on it, even the words of the Church service pronounced by the priest had seemed almost superfluous. The phrase uttered in that solemn moment had sealed her fate and ordained her line of conduct. Her life belonged to this man. Besides, had she not in firm, clear tones given her promise to love, honor, and obey him? To her this was no empty formula—it was an oath; and she had sworn that, come what would, how fatal soever to her personal happiness, she would be loyal to her vow.

She prepared to play her new rôle with the ardor which she had always shown in seconding her husband, even in the most trifling affairs of life, quietly effacing herself, satisfied and happy if Philip seemed to appreciate the efforts that she made to please him.

Philip left his house in Elm Avenue without even trying to sublet it. He took a house in Bel-

gravia and installed himself there among the aristocracy and plutocracy of London. Mayfair is, perhaps, still more aristocratic and select; but it is sombre, its streets are narrow, and Philip had been too long accustomed to plenty of light to care to bury himself alive in the midst of its dark, depressing-looking streets. Mayfair is to Belgravia what the Rue St. Dominique is to the Avenue des Champs Elysées in Paris.

The rent of his house was a thousand a year. When he added what he would have to pay in parish taxes, Queen's taxes, and all those little blessings which endear Great Britain to every true-born Englishman, Philip had to come to the conclusion that his new house would cost him about fifteen hundred pounds a year.

He spent some five thousand pounds upon his installation. The funiture was chosen by Dora, who was consulted upon every point. Most of the things from the St. John's Wood house were distributed throughout the new one, but Dora took it upon her to arrange, on the ground floor, behind the dining-room, the library, exactly as it had been arranged in Elm Avenue; not a book, nor a picture, not a photograph, nor a knick-knack was forgotten. Dora had the bump of remembrance.

This library would be her favorite room, she said to herself, and she would pass an hour or two every day here among the souvenirs of the happy days lived in the artists' quarter. Near the drawing-room Philip arranged a room which

might have passed for a studio in the eyes of people who see likenesses everywhere. To speak truly, there was no longer a studio.

As for painting, there was no more question of that; Philip had other ideas in his head. He would go into society and would entertain. He could do it now that he had a suitable house. He would make useful acquaintances, and the celebrity that his invention of the famous shell had brought him would lead to his being sought after. He had no doubts, no misgivings. The future was safe enough.

Occasionally, however, he fell into reflection. He had spent something like five thousand pounds over his installation; there remained therefore in hand not more than thirty-two or three thousand pounds. At five per cent. interest, that would bring him an income of some fifteen hundred pounds, just about the amount of his rent and taxes. Now, he had started his new existence on a scale which entailed an expenditure of at least ten thousand a year. He would therefore need to earn the rest, about eight thousand pounds, or else his capital would last him only four years. There it was—a judgment without appeal, arrived at by the inflexible rule of three.

It is not money that ensures a man's being rich, it is the excess of his receipts over his expenditures. Such is the declaration made by that great philosopher who was called Monsieur de la Palice. Such is also, however, the principle which even very intelligent people fail to understand.

Philip reflected. "Pooh!" said he to himself, "there is no need to bother myself yet, fortune has smiled on me once, she will again."

Dora consented to everything without a murmur. With the exception of a general sadness, which she could not entirely dissimulate, she gave no outward sign of dissent, and approved before Philip many things which she tacitly condemned. She did not encourage her husband in his new ideas, but she did not feel the strength of will to discourage him. She would not earn reproaches. She had taken a resolution to let events follow their course and to remain firm at her post of observation, so as to be ready to save Philip before the coming of the downfall which to her seemed inevitable. She almost found a happiness in this new part. "I will prevent his going under," she said to herself.

Gayety had vanished, there was no more laughter, the chief subject of talk was speculations. In the mornings Philip read the financial papers.

"By Jove!" he would exclaim, "here is a South African mine which was worth £1 a share. These shares are now worth £12." Philip was probably seeking to solve this problem: How can I make £8000 a year with a capital of hardly £40,000? And the devil answered him: By placing your money where you can get twenty-five per cent. interest for it.

Philip was anxious; Dora was depressed; life was monotonous, and they were both bored to death. Dora would fain have said to the French

government, much as good old La Fontaine's cobbler said to the financier, "Give me back my songs and take again your lucre."

The artists, writers, and all the friends who had frequented the old house dropped away one after another, till Lorimer was almost the only one they continued to see anything of. He had always felt a sincere friendship for Philip and Dora, and now they were playing a little comedy before him which interested him keenly. He watched closely and awaited the dénouement. He came in his old intimate way, without waiting to be asked. His frequent visits delighted Dora, for he was the only friend to whom she opened her heart or from whom she could hope for sound advice. "Be patient," he would say, "Philip will grow tired of this kind of life; one of these days he will set to work, and will return to his studio never to leave it."

To speak truly, Dora scarcely had time to brood on the past. The management of her house, which was kept with scrupulous order, six servants to superintend, her child to be watched over, visits to pay and receive—all these things filled up her time. But, full of occupation as her days might be, the life that they composed appeared to her empty and aimless, compared to the one she had led hitherto.

Once a week she received, and her rooms were crowded. By her sweetness and tact, the simplicity of her manner and rare beauty of her face and figure, it had been easy for her to make the

conquest of the fashionable world as, years before, she had made the conquest of the artistic one. The men were loud and untiring in their praises of her. The women, who, with the best will in the world to do so, could find no flaw in her, declared that she was "very nice." Some of them went so far as to pronounce her charming, and one or two to say that she was fit to be a duchess.

"What do you think of my new acquaintances?" asked Dora of Lorimer, after he had helped her to entertain a number of them on a Thursday afternoon."

"Lady A. is pretty," he replied; "Lady B. is not bad in her own style."

"No, no, I ask you for a general opinion."

"In the lump? Well, I would give the whole batch for a new umbrella."

"You are like me," said Dora. "I would give all the trees of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens for the few chestnuts and limes in my garden in Elm Avenue. And how stupidly they kill time, all these people! In spite of their rank and their fortune, they are bored to death. I can see it in their wrinkled foreheads and quenched, weary-looking eyes. The theatre makes them yawn, they prefer the vulgar inanities of the music-halls; they do not read; art is nothing to them; their parties are mass-meetings, where one is hours on one's feet without being able to move or talk comfortably, and to get a sandwich or a glass of champagne costs the poor victims of this strange hospitality frantic struggles. When they speak of

their pleasures it is with a sigh as if they were so many irksome tasks, and, the season over, they go to Homburg or elsewhere to drink the waters and get set up and patched up in readiness for the shooting and house parties of the autumn.

"You exaggerate slightly," said Lorimer; "there are in that set plenty of very clever people with literary and artistic tastes, but I grant you that the majority lead a pitiful existence."

Dora had taken a violent dislike to society, so when Lorimer came she often revenged herself for the smiles she was obliged to dispense to her new acquaintances by running them down to her heart's content.

Philip had lately been several times to Paris without taking Dora, as he had always done formerly. He had not confided to her the object of these journeys, but had contented himself with telling her that he was going on business. He was always back again on the second or third day.

Without entering into details, he had mentioned some visits to the Russian Embassy. He had even confided to her that, in consequence of a rather lengthy correspondence between the Russian ambassador in Paris and General Ivan Sabaroff, War Minister in St. Petersburg, it was not impossible that the Czar might make overtures to him for the purchase of the shell he had invented. The French Government, he said, would not be opposed to his accepting such overtures from an ally of France.

There would be nothing very extraordinary in

such a proceeding, of course. The young Czar of all the Russias and the worthy President of the Republic had given each other the kiss of brotherhood in public; Monsieur Felix Faure had returned the visit which the young sovereign had paid him; and there had been signed at St. Petersburg that gigantic joke, that Titanic hoax which is called the Franco-Russian alliance, an alliance between the Phrygian cap and the Cossack cap, between the sons of the great Revolution and the scourgers of women, an alliance, by the terms of which the blind Gallic cook undertook to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the wily bear of the Caucasians, and gave to the rest of Europe a grotesque and amusing spectacle. The French *badaud* rarely misses an opportunity of making France the laughing-stock of the whole world. It is much to be regretted that the French do not read the two or three columns that are devoted to them every day by the newspapers of London, New York, and Berlin. Their follies supply these great dailies with more material for comment than they can hope to get out of all that goes on in their respective countries, and that, I say it to their credit and to be just, without bitterness, without prejudice, for France counts among her sincerest friends and admirers, in England and America, all that is most intelligent and enlightened in these two countries of light and leading. It is a cosmopolitan traveller, French-born and still French at heart, who ventures to speak thus in parenthesis. Alexis de Tocqueville might have

written in the year of grace 1899 the following lines, which were penned by him in 1849, "France, the most brilliant and most dangerous nation of Europe, is destined ever to be, in turn, an object of admiration, of hatred, of terror, and of pity, but of indifference, never."

VIII

THE HOUSE-WARMING

PHILIP decided to give a house-warming party in the month of November, and to ask to a large *soirée musicale* all the society notabilities—in fact, all London and his wife. Cards of invitation were sent to ambassadors, cabinet ministers, aristocracy, and city princes. He invited a few literary friends, but not many artists, being afraid of passing for a man who was trying to dazzle his less fortunate brothers in art by his wealth. Perhaps he also rather feared meeting them—the studio world has not a very developed bump of admiration for painters who make a rapid fortune and settle in Belgravia. Those who believed that he still painted had nicknamed him *le Grantham des Salons*, a not very brilliant pun upon his name, which sounded rather like the two French words *grand homme*. Between four and five hundred people accepted invitations. The artists for the most part refused, "having a previous engagement which prevented them from accepting Mrs. Philip Grantham's kind invitation." Poor Dora seemed to see the artistic world slipping away from her, since Art itself had deserted the house.

Lorimer had accepted. Thank Heaven, she would at least have one real friend at her reception! She set about doing her best to insure the success of her party. She had a long list of the people who were coming, all well-known names. She gave *carte blanche* to the best impresario of London, who was intrusted with the arrangement of the musical programme. She ordered her supper from Benoist, and flowers and palms in profusion for the decoration of the house, and went to the best dressmaker in London for a gown, which, when it came home, Philip pronounced simply beyond competition. Dora was a born *grande dame*. True, she preferred the simple intellectual life that she had led hitherto, but she was fitted to shine in the gay world. If she had been the wife of the President of the French Republic, all the Faubourg St. Germain would willingly have rendered her homage at the Elysée, and would probably have said, on returning home, "A *Républicaine* can be as beautiful, witty, and distinguished-looking as the most high-born *Marquise*, were she as noble as Charlemagne or Louis XIV."

Dora felt sure of herself, certain of doing honor to Philip, and, notwithstanding the profound sadness that reigned in her heart, she was still woman enough to rejoice in advance over the success which she anticipated. She accordingly made all her preparations to that end, and took pains to put her beauty and intelligence at her husband's service. Philip, for that matter, did things in lordly style; he had given Dora an unlimited

credit—*carte blanche*—that is to say a blank check. Philip wished to have a great social success.

Without saying anything to his wife, he had sent invitations to all the principal papers, thinking that if the editors did not come they would not fail to send reporters who would write accounts of the party, the publication of which would make them known, he and Dora, in the society in which he had taken a firm resolution to shine.

The concert alone caused Dora some anxiety. She almost regretted having had "music" printed on her cards. Her artistic temperament had often caused her to pity from the bottom of her heart those pianists and singers, whom nobody listens to at parties, and whose first notes invariably gave the signal for general conversation. She thought this unmannerly, even offensive, not only to the hosts, but to the artistes. The shopkeeper demands only the price of the goods that he sells you, and it is a matter of indifference to him whether you have your hat in your hand or on your head in his shop. The artiste is more difficult to please. He asks for the appreciation of those who pay him, and more than one celebrated star has consented to sing in drawing-rooms for hundreds of pounds, but only on the formal condition that silence would be enforced. It must be said that at these gatherings many people, who are too busy to pay one another frequent calls, are pleased to have the opportunity of meeting, the men to talk of politics and business, the women

of dress, theatres, gossip, or scandals. They can so well dispense with music that many English-women have the words "no music" printed on their invitation cards. I know one who, in order to persuade me to accept her invitation, put a post-script thus: "I shall have a Hungarian orchestra, but you won't hear it."

Dora was reassured, however, as the impresario who was to arrange the music knew his public. He had guaranteed her "complete satisfaction."

She thought no more about it, and awaited the day with all the serenity of a society stager who had done nothing else all her life.

IX

THE CONFESSION

LIKE the great Condé, on the eve of the battle of Rocroy, Dora slept peacefully and profoundly on the eve of the day that was to see her play the rôle of hostess for the first time in her new house in Belgravia.

She was careful not to tire herself during the day, in order to feel fresh and alert at half-past nine, the hour at which the guests would begin to arrive.

For a mistress of a house—for a novice especially—a reception of this kind is a severe trial. She stands four mortal hours at the entrance of the drawing-room, all the while on the *qui-vive*. She would like to possess a hundred pairs of eyes instead of one, to assure herself that everything is going as smoothly as she could wish, for the least little *contretemps* will spoil the party. Out of four hundred people who accept invitations, two hundred come to criticise—some the music, others the supper, others the wines, others the dresses. If there is the slightest hitch in the proceedings, there are whispered comments on it. If the music is bad, people drown it with their voices; if the

supper is of doubtful quality, they go early; if the servants do not number the hats carefully, the men, on leaving, choose the best that come to their notice; if the hostess is embarrassed, they smile. If the women meet people whom they have ceased to know, they look bored. The most thankless task in the world is giving a large "At Home." I know many women who, after giving such parties, have to go to bed for a couple of days.

Dora dined lightly at seven o'clock, and, after giving her last instructions, went to dress. At nine o'clock she was ready. Her white dress of exquisite material, trimmed with old lace and silver embroidery, suited her to perfection, and set off every line of her supple figure. She seemed to be moulded in it. She wore a *rivière* of diamonds and emeralds, and three magnificent diamond stars were fastened on her bodice. Philip had given her these diamonds, to console her for the portrait that he had not had the courage to finish. She would have infinitely preferred the portrait, but she accepted the jewels willingly, and, thanking her husband prettily, she said to herself: "When the shell bursts, its pieces will be useful. I shall, at any rate, have a couple of thousand pounds with which to face the situation." She wore no ornament in her hair, which seemed to be proud of being intrusted alone with the task of showing off her beautiful, pure, Madonna-like face. Never had a lovelier head, framed in luxuriant tresses, been placed more

proudly on classical shoulders. Her beauty was dazzling.

She went into the drawing-room to give a last glance at the decorations. Everything looked perfect.

Notwithstanding the air of calm and simple dignity that her face wore, like all who have the knowledge of their own worth and who know their triumph is assured, those who had examined Dora's expression attentively would have discovered a new anxiety depicted on her countenance, perhaps nothing very important, but nevertheless an annoyance at the least.

General Ivan Sabaroff, Russian War Minister, was in London. Philip had invited him to Dora's party, and he had accepted. Philip told his wife this at dinner.

Dora sat down in the drawing-room with a cloud on her brow.

"Sabaroff!" she said to herself, "General Sabaroff! What if it be the Colonel Sabaroff that I met eight years ago at Monte Carlo? He was already much talked about. To-day he is the Russian Minister of War—it is quite possible, even probable; but then? See the man again! Oh no, never! And, yet, I shall be obliged to receive him—I shall warn Philip that he had a detestable reputation with women, and if that does not suffice, well—I will tell Philip everything. And why shouldn't I? The confession will not be very painful, and I have often been on the point of making it. I have made up my mind—I will not,

and I cannot meet this man. I will be polite to him to-night, but very distant; of course, I know what is expected of me as hostess. After that I hope there will be an end of it."

This resolution seemed to clear away the clouds from her face. She smiled eagerly at her husband when he came gayly into the drawing-room.

"Everything is ready and admirably arranged," said Philip. "The drawing-room is decorated with such taste! Ah, my dearest, it is easy to see you have had a hand in the arrangements. I recognize your touch in a thousand little details. Your party will be a huge success—the rooms will look splendid, the music will be excellent, the supper first-rate, and we shall have a regular crowd of celebrities and pretty women—it will be a triumph! And you, darling—how beautiful you look to-night! that gown suits you to perfection. I wish I was going to have you all to myself."

"How absurd! nothing would have been easier, if you had only expressed the wish," said she, a little piqued.

There are many men who are on the point of falling in love with their wives when they see them near to making the conquest of a crowd of outsiders.

"And those diamonds," continued he, "how splendid they look on you! You were built to wear a diadem, that's your style. At last you are playing your proper rôle, and I am proud to see you doing the honors of a house that is worthy

of you. When I come to think of it, fortune has been very kind to me."

On seeing Dora quite unmoved, he added:

"Really, one would think, to look at you, that all this does not stir you to the least enthusiasm; it's curious! sometimes I can't quite make you out. I am nearly beside myself with delight. Now, listen a moment," said he, taking her hand, "I am negotiating with Russia. If they take my invention, as I have every hope that they will, my ambition will be satisfied, my wildest dreams realized. I shall be rich. You know we are not really rich. It costs a perfect fortune to keep this house going. Ah, but only let General Sabaroff approve of my shell, and, dearest, we are all right."

He rubbed his hands with joy.

"Philip," said Dora, "I want to speak to you about this General Sabaroff."

"Yes, yes," said Philip, without heeding her; "I want you to charm him. You must make a conquest of him. Bring all your diplomacy to bear. He has an immense influence at the Russian Court, and is, I hear, the favorite minister of the Czar. Being Minister of War, he is the master, the autocrat of his department. And, darling, I count on you to help me. I repeat to you, everything depends on him."

"Money again, Philip, always money," replied Dora. "Are you not rich enough yet? If we have not the income to keep a house like this, why do we live in it? Why should we live

beyond our means? I don't think it is right, Philip. What has become of those happy days when we loved each other so much, and when you thought only of your art? Ah, give me back my dear studio."

"I am not rich enough yet," said Philip, "but I am perhaps on the road that leads to fortune."

"You were rich before, and on the road to fame. I loved an artist and I adored his art."

"Oh, deuce take art and artists," cried Philip, getting angry.

"Philip, how can you? If you only knew how it pains me to hear you speak like that."

"Well, my dear Dora," said Philip, "there are times at which I can scarcely keep my patience with you—you don't interest yourself in me as you used to do."

"Is it really you who dare speak to me in that way?" exclaimed Dora, indignantly. "Is it you who accuse me of not being the same, you who consecrated your life to art and to my happiness, and who to-day think of nothing but making money, like the first city man in the street. There are times when I long to go and earn my own living with my brush. The only thing that holds me back is Eva—you too, perhaps, for I am certain that one of these days you will cry 'help,' and I shall have to rescue you from drowning."

"You are ungrateful, Dora. It is for you that I work."

"For me? But can't you see I loathe the life I lead? For me? When the thirst for wealth

gets hold of a man, he has always the same excuse—it is not for himself. It is even the eternal parrot-cry of the miser; if he holds fast to his money, it is for the children; and under this pretext he renders his wife, his children, and every one around him as miserable as he is himself."

"Night and day," said Philip, "I have worked, and God is my witness that in working all my thoughts were for you. Now that I am almost at the goal, you turn against me—you refuse to give a smile to the man who can realize all my hopes."

"Ah, why do you choose that one?" said Dora, frowning.

"What a funny remark!" said Philip. "Just as if he was my choice."

Then, looking at Dora, who seemed agitated, he added:

"What do you mean?"

"I have been told that General Sabaroff is a libertine, a roué of the worst type, and you know what a detestation I have of such men."

"Let him be what he likes; what on earth does it matter to me?" exclaimed Philip. "Really, Dora, you can help me with a few smiles, ask him to come and see you on one of your Thursdays, without compromising yourself, and without your virtue running any danger. It ought to be easy enough for a woman to protect her virtue against a man—in a drawing-room," added Philip, with a slightly mocking air which intensely displeased Dora.

"Yes, much easier than protecting one's reputation against women. I hope you will not insist. I shall receive the General politely—that goes without saying—but I shall certainly not ask him to come and see me on the days I receive or the days on which I do not receive."

Philip and Dora looked at each other for a few seconds. They seemed both very determined.

"And suppose I insist," said Philip, who was the first to break the silence, "and, what is more, suppose I expect you to do what I wish."

"In that case," said Dora, "since there is no other way of obtaining your indulgence, stay a moment and listen to me."

Philip looked at the clock..

"There is plenty of time," continued Dora, "we have nearly half an hour before any one will come. My dear Philip, I have every reason to believe that this General Sabaroff is no stranger to me. Perhaps I should have told you this before, but when I have been on the point of doing so, I always said to myself, 'What is the use?' and I really did not see the need of it. This is the incident in two words. When I was nineteen, just out of the school-room, my aunt took me to winter in the Riviera. Among the many people we met there was a Colonel Sabaroff, a man of about thirty-five. From the first he paid me marked attention, and at the end of two months he made me an offer of marriage. He was handsome, clever, say fascinating if you like, had the reputation of being a brilliant officer, and was

much sought after in society. I, a mere child, could not but feel flattered at his choice of me. What my answer might have been—I had asked for a week to consider it—I can scarcely tell, although my heart, I can say in all sincerity, was not touched. A *bal masqué* was to be held that week, and my aunt had subscribed to it, but she disliked public balls, and it had been decided that we were not to go, especially as she thought it hardly proper for two women alone to be present at such a ball. You know, my aunt was then still young and pretty. However, my uncle, arriving from England on the day of the ball, persuaded her to let him take me, for he guessed at my eagerness to go, and he assured her that if he came with me the strictest British propriety would be satisfied. When we reached the ball it was already late. After making a tour of the rooms, we sat down in a dimly lit conservatory, and I was just going to tell him of the offer of marriage I had received, when I started at hearing Colonel Sabaroff's voice in low but fierce altercation with that of a woman. Both were masked, and the language they spoke in was French, which was unintelligible to my uncle. Signing to him to keep silence, I listened intently. My own future was decided in those few minutes. But what need I tell you more except that I, a girl ignorant of all the world's falseness and ugly coarseness, sat dumfounded, petrified, as the history of a vulgar liaison was unfolded to my young ears, and the man who had asked for my hand and heart flung

off a wretched woman who, to her own undoing, had given herself to him a year before."

"What did you do?" asked Philip.

"I sat spellbound as long as their conversation lasted; but when they rose and passed in front of us, I removed my mask, looked the man straight in the face, and, in as steady a voice as I could command, asked my uncle to take me home."

"Did you see any more of him after that?"

"No; the next day, at my request, we left Monte Carlo. During several months I received letters from him, all of which I tore up without reading, and soon, thank God, I ceased to know whether he existed or not."

"Perhaps it is he who sends the pansies?" said Philip.

"Don't talk nonsense," replied Dora.

"But General Sabaroff may not be the man at all."

"I feel sure he must be," said Dora. "The description I have been given of him corresponds perfectly. Philip, if it should be so, you won't throw me into the society of this man, will you? You won't ask me to make him welcome here?"

A servant came in the room to say that the decorations in the dining-room were finished, and to ask whether Dora would go and give a look to them before the florist left the house.

"Very well," said she to the servant, "I will go."

And, smiling at Philip, she said to him:

"It is understood, then—you will not insist any more, Philip."

"Curious tricks Fate plays us all!" exclaimed Philip when Dora had gone. "One would think the devil had a hand in it."

It was half-past nine; nobody was likely to come before ten o'clock. He went down-stairs to the library and asked for a glass of fine champagne and seltzer water. He was pained to see Dora lose her gayety. To give him his due, his one hope was to soon see his ambitious dreams realized, to consecrate anew his whole existence to his wife. He hated himself for being unable to do so at once. But he had gone too far to retrace his steps. He seemed to be carried along by an irresistible current. In his heart of hearts he felt poignantly how much he was in the wrong, but he could not bring himself to break off yet and give up his darling hopes. His behavior had assumed a disgraceful aspect to his eyes, although he dared not own it to himself. Often and often he longed to go and throw himself at Dora's feet. He had not the moral courage necessary to take a decision on which the whole happiness of his wife depended. Every feeling of delicacy and generosity in his composition revolted within him, for he adored her. He fought hard, but each time he returned to the attack he was vanquished.

Philip was unhappy, in spite of the gayety he forced himself to assume; with him was a mortal sadness.

He swallowed his drink, sat down, and began to think over what Dora had said to him.

"Suppose," thought he, "that General Sabaroff should turn out to be Dora's old admirer. Well, what then? He must have forgotten her long ago—she never had any love for him—not even a school-girl's love. Where is the danger? She has a painful recollection of him; but she is no longer a child, she is a woman of the world. Why should she not conquer her antipathy for him and make use of a little diplomacy to render me a service? I must absolutely get General Sabaroff's approval. Everything depends on that. But, what if he should not have forgotten her, if he still loved her? He would not feel disposed to place a fortune in my hands. Stay, though perhaps he would, on the contrary, to please Dora. Another reason why she should be amiable to him—"

His evil genius urged him on.

"It's decided," said he; "whatever it may cost, I must have the man's approbation of my shell—and I must have that money to be rich—really rich. Yes, my dear father, I shall be wealthy, and I will prove to you that it is possible to make a fortune without being your slave."

His spirits brightened considerably, and, rubbing his hands cheerfully, he strode up and down the room exultantly, perfectly convinced that he had formed a resolution which would turn out to his advantage.

"Suppose I should succeed! Well, of course I

shall succeed. I must—something tells me I shall —I will. Yes, this man Sabre-off or Sabre-on must be made much of. As to Dora—with some wives it might be a risky experiment, but with her—why, I should as soon think of doubting my own existence as of doubting her! Oh, my darling!" said he, aloud, taking up a photograph of Dora and kissing it," forgive me for having had such a thought, and still more for having expressed it. Yes, she must receive this. man smilingly whether he turns out to be a Sir Galahad or not. I have gone too far to draw back now. It's annoying all the same — pity there is so much sentimental nonsense in even the best of women, and Dora is one out of ten thousand."

The final chords of a pianoforte solo reached his ears, followed by loud applause.

"By Jove," said he, "I was nearly forgetting all about the party."

He hurriedly left the library and went up-stairs to the drawing-room.

X

BELGRAVIA

DORA was receiving her guests at the top of the staircase, at the entrance of the large drawing-room. Philip found about thirty people already arrived, and he proceeded to shake hands and distribute words of welcome. At half-past ten it had become difficult to circulate in the rooms; the staircase and hall were crowded, but a stream of carriages still flowed up.

At eleven o'clock the fête was at its height, veritably dazzling. The lights, the flowers, made it a fairy scene. It was a phantasmagoria of heads, bare shoulders, black coats, diamonds, shimmering satins, and priceless lace; and, permeating the whole, a perfume as of hot-house flowers.

All the types of society were to be recognized in the throng—the diplomatists, with their eternal smile and irreproachably cut clothes; the aristocracy, with its frigid, bored look, occasionally smiling, as if by mechanism; the City by its biblical noses; the Stock Exchange by those cold, metallic, careworn men, aged before their time by the wrinkles that money preoccupations

plough on their foreheads; literature by men bright and interested in everything around them, cheerily provoking ripples of laughter among the women, and recounting their best anecdotes among the men. The fine arts were represented by a few noble-looking heads rising out of Shakespeare collars.

On all sides were exquisite toilettes, setting off forms of dazzling fairness and admirable poise—a complete representative crowd of that calm, proud, haughty British nation, full of dignity, robust health, and self-confidence; a nation that holds in its hands the destinies of half the earth.

Lorimer and de Lussac met in a corner of the drawing-room.

"What a reception!" said de Lussac. "All London is rubbing shoulders here, in order to have a look at the man who has invented the famous shell."

"And his wife," added Lorimer.

"And his wife," repeated de Lussac. "I never saw her looking so lovely. Raphael might have drawn the oval of her face, Murillo her eyes, Titian her hair, Rubens her shoulders."

"And a modern English painter the sadness of her brow," said Lorimer. "Doesn't she look bored, poor woman?"

"That puts the finishing touch, and helps to make her superb—ideal. A calm, cold, sad face is the one *mieux portée* in England. It is almost *de rigueur*. Nothing is such bad form as to appear to enjoy life. She is quite *à la mode*."

"*A la mort*," said Lorimer. "My dear fellow, I'll tell you what it is, such parties as this give me shivers down the back. Your countrywoman, Madam Vigée-Lebrun, was right when she said, "The English amuse themselves as the French bore themselves."

"Then why do you come here, old fellow?"

"Oh, I! Why, I come as a doctor. I am deeply interested in a special case. I am studying and following carefully the progress of a malady. I am here diagnosing."

"And your patient is—"

"Our worthy host," said Lorimer.

"How do you find him to-day?"

"The disease is taking its course; he will get over it; but the cure will take time."

Lorimer fixed his eye-glass in his eye, and surveyed the crowd.

"Ah," he ejaculated, letting his glass drop again, "how I preferred the good little Bohemian Sunday suppers, the pretty little house in St. John's Wood! The servants were dismissed, and everybody helped everybody else. There was a house where gayety reigned supreme, *en autocrate!* And what music we used to have! What glorious talks, what delicious discussions on every topic under the sun! Artists, writers, journalists, outvied one another in brilliancy. Politics were put aside, and the Bourse and all that makes modern life insufferable. We were never more than twelve of us, so that the conversation could always be general, and, for that matter, the house did not

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contain a room large enough to hold comforably more than a dozen people. How all the guests harmonized together! Those were parties. Here they are funereal functions. In a small room conversation is easy, people can talk easily. In a large room one is swamped, and feels like a solution of one's self."

"I see," said de Lussac, "that in spite of all your successes you have remained a philosopher."

"More than ever. But look round you. Look at all these faces. These people touch a spring to make themselves smile. Oh, if that is your fashion of enjoying yourself, thanks, I prefer something else. Every time I come among this set I am taken with furious longings every quarter of an hour to rush into the street and shout, to assure myself that I am alive. Poor old Grantham! It was his dream to see his wife shine in society. Poor devil! and such a good fellow, not to speak of his great future as a painter. However, there is our hostess coming towards us. Look at her! How happy she looks, this queen with her new crown—a capital model for 'Mary Stuart going to the Scaffold.'"

De Lussac, recognizing some people he knew, moved off to join their group. Lorimer went towards Dora, who smiled with relief at seeing him in the crowd. Every one seemed to have arrived now, and there was no need for her to remain at her post; but, in case of possible fresh comers, she stayed near the entrance of the room.

She looked pale, her face was drawn with fatigue, and her eyes looked unnaturally large.

"Oh, what good it does one to see an old friend's familiar face in a crowd like this," she said to Lorimer, drawing him back towards the doorway of the large drawing-room. "My dear Gerald, I don't believe I know by sight the half of my guests."

The idea struck her as so funny that she began to laugh heartily.

"Do you know half?" exclaimed Lorimer; ".that is very good really. As for the crowd, don't complain of that. An English hostess is a failure if people do not stifle in her drawing-room; and if half a dozen women faint, then the party is a social success that covers its giver with glory. The society papers talk of her— You seem tired."

"Yes," said Dora, "tired—at the end of my strength and my courage."

"Let me take you to the buffet."

They went down together. Lorimer got her a biscuit, an ice, and a glass of champagne, and this light refreshment reanimated her.

On their way back to the drawing-room Lorimer took up the thread of the conversation again.

"Come now, my dear Dora," said he, "your lot is very enviable after all, you know. You are young, beautiful, rich, adored—one of the queens of society. What more do you ask?"

"I ask nothing more," replied Dora; "I ask a great deal less. A queen in society! I had

rather be queen at home, as I used to be. We were left in peace in those times. Now all the idlers pry into our life. And why? Oh, it is too silly! Because Philip refused to sell Sir Benjamin Pond a picture which he was painting for me. Yes, that is what is occupying them to-night. They all go to have a look at the portrait, one after another, and then they laugh. Can you conceive such a thing? There exists, or rather there existed, a painter who loved his wife, and did not mind showing it! Is it not droll? So vulgar, you know! It appears that it creates high fun at the clubs. Ah, you may talk about women's tongues, but to retail rubbish and circulate scandal you must get a dozen men together in a club smoking-room. They are beyond competition, my dear Gerald. I would give all my guests for a couple of intimate friends, for a couple of devoted relatives. Ah, you may say what you like, blood is thicker than afternoon tea."

"You were too happy," said Lorimer, who had been amused at Dora's tirade, "now you must share your happiness a little."

"Yes, and my husband with everybody. Where is my share? How I should like to leave this room and go and sit in a quiet corner for a good talk, such as we used to have in the good old times in the other house."

"Why move? Stay where you are, and instead of thinking yourself on show, try and imagine that all this crowd is here for your amusement. I know all your guests personally or by sight. I

am your 'Who's who' for to-night. Make use of me. I will show and explain the magic lantern."

"So you shall," said Dora, amused by the suggestion. "Now, then, who is that horrible creature painted and dyed, with eyes half out of her head and an eternal sickly smile on her face?"

"Lady Agatha Ashby, an old grump of the fashionable world. No one knows her age. Some say it is seventy-two, others put it at a hundred and seventy-two. She is enamelled, and the mouth, as you see it, is fixed in that way with a smile that lasts three hours. They say she used to be pretty and rather witty. Makes it her duty to know everybody worth knowing. Will probably leave memoirs behind her—a diary at any rate."

"And those," said Dora, indicating two couples passing near her.

"The Earl of Gampton. Behind him the Countess, a young American woman, who brought him three million dollars, with which he has been able to get his coat-of-arms out of pawn. Our British aristocracy gets regilded in Chicago and New York."

"How can a woman love or respect a man who allows himself to be purchased for a title of nobility?"

"And," said Lorimer, "how can a man love or respect a woman who buys him, and degrades him in his own eyes?"

"You are right," responded Dora. "I cannot

see any possible element of happiness in such marriages. She is ugly," she added, after taking a second look at the Countess.

"Beauty fades," said Lorimer, in excuse for Lord Gampton.

"Yes, but ugliness remains," replied Dora.

"And the dollars, too, happily—it is a compensation—a fine indemnity."

"Not always; fortunes have been known to fade too."

"Ah," ejaculated Lorimer, as there passed by him a middle-aged man, fairly good-looking, but wearing a forbidding, sulky expression, "there is Sir George Hardy. He has not inflicted his wife on you."

"No, thank Heaven!—if what people say is true."

"True enough. People don't ask Lady Hardy, but Sir George is a philosopher; he does not resent being asked out alone; and he has the good sense never to try and introduce one to his wife. There are two kinds of women—those you marry, and those you don't introduce to your friends. Sir George has them both in one."

"What a dead-weight such a woman must be! To be proud of one's wife, to be proud of one's husband—that is one of the great keys to happiness in married life. Oh, Gerald, do look at that imposing-looking matron; who is she?"

"The Dowager-Countess of Chausey, pretty well known for her serious flirtations in 1850."

"How can a woman of her age go about so out-

rageously uncovered? So long as Englishwomen do not show their feet, they think they are all right. Her dress is perfectly indecent."

"Not the dress, but its contents," said Lorimer. "The Countess might, it is true, draw a veil across the past and leave something to the imagination of the beholder. But the fun of the thing is that the dowager is one of the vice-presidents of the society recently founded for the suppression of the nude in our museums and picture galleries. O the British matron!"

"What a proud carriage she has for a woman of her age," said Dora.

"One would think she was carrying the Holy Grail—two Holy Grails in a Parsifal procession."

"Upon my word, I do believe," said Dora, "that women nowadays trust to Providence to keep their dresses on their backs! But what lovely frocks! I do not understand how there can still be people who say that the Englishwoman does not know how to dress."

"Not now. A few years back one might have said with truth that the German woman was covered, the Englishwoman was clothed!"

"Not always," said Dora, laughing.

"The American was arrayed, but the Frenchwoman alone was dressed. In the present day, the Englishwoman of good society dresses as tastefully as her French sisters, and this fact would be known in France, if Englishwomen had not that bad habit of putting all their oldest garments into requisiton when they travel."

"Frenchwomen have not much to teach us now."

"One or two things still. A little Parisian dressmaker who would come over and set up in England to teach Englishwomen to hold their dresses up in the street ought to make a fortune in no time. It is the most graceful, artistic, and typical movement of the Frenchwoman."

"On the other hand, my dear Gerald," said Dora, "Frenchwomen mince or trot or proceed, Englishwomen walk. We are their superiors in many things."

"We might make comparisons without end, and finally be sorely puzzled where to award the prize."

Here the servant announced, "Mrs. Van der Leyd Smith."

"Smythe—not Smith," said the new arrival, indignantly, turning to the domestic.

"That is the mother of Lady Gampton," whispered Lorimer to Dora.

Dora rose and went to shake hands with her.

"I am a little late," she said; "I have been to the Queen's Theatre to see 'Majella.' It is a play that will draw crowded houses till the end of next season. You have seen it, of course."

"Yes," said Dora, "I was at the first-night —allow me to introduce its author—Mr. Gerald Lorimer."

"What a pleasure to meet you!" said she, as Lorimer came forward and bowed. "I congratu-

late you sincerely; your play is a *chef-d'œuvre*. The house was packed to-night and the enthusiasm boundless."

"I am happy the public appreciate the play," said Lorimer, bowing his acknowledgments of her compliments.

"'Majella' will place our old friend in the front rank of the dramatic authors of the day."

"And fill his coffers to the brim," said the American lady, with a knowing glance, which meant—"that is the main thing."

Lorimer and Dora exchanged comprehensive looks. The lady's wink had explained in one flash the motto of New York. Not *who are you?* nor *what are you?* nor yet *what have you done?* but *how much do you make?*

Loud and evidently sincere applause was heard coming from the smaller drawing-room where the concert was being given. Presently there appeared, making towards the staircase, a tall, fair young man who replied by smiles and repeated bows to the bravos which were accorded to him by this *blasé* audience of people, little accustomed to lavish applause on any one. It was Schowalski, a well-known pianist who came to London every year to give a concert, and play in drawing-rooms during the season. At a certain distance, Schowalski's head recalled that of his celebrated compatriot and confrère Paderewski; however, he had not the delicate, finely chiselled profile which gives the latter his striking and unforgettable physiognomy. Taller, more vigorous, more solidly

and massively built, with long, light hair, straight and thick, and his enormous mustache falling in a semicircle around the mouth, he might have sat for Brennus or Vercingetorix.

Dora held out her hand as he was about to go down-stairs.

"Thanks a thousand times," said she; "you have played like an angel."

And she introduced him to the American lady still at her side.

"I had the honor of making madame's acquaintance in New York," said Schowalski, bowing.

"Really," replied Mrs. W. G. van der Leyd Smythe; "when was that?"

"Why, two years ago, in New York, in your drawing-room, where I had the honor of playing."

"That's true—I think I remember—in January, 1896; yes, yes—delighted to meet you again, Mr. —I never can remember names — what is his name again?" asked she of Dora.

Schowalski heard no more. He bowed, shook hands with a few friends, and disappeared.

"Schowalski is one of the greatest pianists of the day," said Dora.

"I know, I know," said the lady with the string of names, "but what impertinence to enter into conversation with your guests, as if he had been invited. Upon my word, the effrontery of these musicians!"

She followed him with her eyes, as she stared

through a pair of long-handled glasses, that are a weapon of offence in the fingers of some women.

"Well, to be sure," she cried, "if he isn't shaking hands with Lady Gampton now! My dear Mrs. Grantham, in New York we do not entertain musicians; we engage them to entertain us—we pay them and we are quits."

"My dear Mrs. Van der Leyd Smith."

"Smythe," said the lady, correcting Dora.

"Excuse me, I never can remember names. In England, artists like Schowalski are received by the aristocracy, and even at Court. Perhaps that makes them so bold as to think they may be fit to associate with the aristocracy of New York."

"Take that," she said to herself.

The magnificent New-Yorker fanned herself, smiled a little awry, and went to join the group which held her daughter, the Countess of Gampton.

Lorimer had not lost a word of the conversation. He would fain have cried "Bravo."

"For a *débutante*," said he, "you are going strong—that was promising."

"My dear Gerald, I feel that I am getting spiteful—I shall bite soon."

Just at this moment, quite near the door, she perceived a lady taking notes. She had already noticed her before—this person who drew up every now and then near certain groups, carefully studied the dresses, and looked up and down the people whom she did not seem to know.

"Do tell me," Dora said to Lorimer, "who is

that woman who puzzles me so? What is she doing? She seems to be taking notes; just now she was making little sketches—she is an artist, no doubt."

"How innocent you are!" cried Lorimer, laughing loudly. "Yes, she is an artist, if you will—who works for some fashion paper—or a lady reporter taking notes for a society paper."

"But I do not know her," said Dora; "I am perfectly sure I never asked her here."

"You, no; but perhaps some one else. For that matter, reporters find their way pretty nearly everywhere without invitation. It is their calling. This one is taking notes, to publish in her paper an account of your party."

"But it is an insult," cried Dora; "I wish they would leave me alone. I don't want accounts in papers—my house is private."

"Wait a moment—why, yes," exclaimed Lorimer, who had just put up his eye-glass to look at the lady in question; "yes, of course, I know her; she writes for *The Social Wave*, a paper for people in the swim. Shall I introduce her to you?"

"Oh no, thank you, please don't," replied Dora.

"Some time ago," continued Lorimer, "I used to meet her often at parties. She is a rather clever little woman, and has the knack of turning out readable paragraphs. She is tolerated everywhere for the sake of what she writes—you know, there are plenty of people who like publicity."

Lorimer had noticed that the lady reporter had let fall two leaves from her note-book. He watched

his opportunity, picked them up, and brought them to Dora.

"Look, we are going to have some fun. I have samples. Listen, 'Lady Mardon looked thrillingly lovely in electric blue . . . her superb shoulders'" . . .

"Enough, enough," said Dora. "The idea of it."

"Wait a minute; here is something else. 'Lady Margaret Solby wore a dream of sea-green and salmon, and was the admiration of every one. Mrs. Van der Leyd Smythe received congratulations on all sides on the subject of her daughter's marriage with the young Earl of Gampton.'"

"And people read that?" said Dora.

"Certainly; and, more wonderful still, people buy it. Oh, listen to this; here is something that concerns you personally. 'Mrs. Philip Grantham wore a dress of white satin, trimmed with lace and silver embroidery, and, blazing with diamonds and emeralds, received her guests with a simplicity and a grace which will speedily make her one of the most popular hostesses in London.' Now, that is what I call amiable; she treats you with generosity." And seeing that Dora seemed very much annoyed, he added, "That is the kind of literature that delights our modest countrywomen."

"There are no more journalists," said Dora, with disgust; "there are only *concierges*."

She took the pages and tore them in shreds. Then, with a little feeling of shame at having been amusing herself at the expense of her

guests, she rose, made a little sign to Lorimer, and was soon swallowed up in the crush, saying a few pleasant words here and there to her acquaintances as she went.

Lorimer went down to the buffet, where he found Schowalski, who was going in heavily for sandwiches, cakes, and ices and champagne. The appetite of musicians is proverbial!

"Ah, Monsieur Lorimer," said he, "I am so glad to see you; you will be the very man to render me a little service. I have just finished," he added, in confidence, "a grand concerto in four parts for the piano. In that concerto I have expressed all the great sorrows of life: First, an adagio—sad, full of tears; then a grand allegro, full of despair. You understand, don't you? Well, what I am trying to find is a title, a telling title. As a playwright you know the importance of a good title. Can you suggest something?"

"My dear sir," said Lorimer, "great sorrows are silent."

"What do you mean?" asked the pianist, for whom British humor was a closed letter. "Are you joking with me? How can one be silent and make music?"

The most thankless task in the world is explaining a joke to a person who has not seen it. Lorimer did not try, and after suggesting *Les peines du cœur*, *Angoisses de l'âme*, *Le mal de dents*, *Les désespoirs de l'amour*, and a few other eye-tickling titles, he left the puzzled composer and made his way up-stairs. It was close upon midnight, the hour at which supper was to be served.

XI

GENERAL SABAROFF

PHILIP was here, there, and everywhere, playing the host to the admiration of all. Every one voted him charming. The most exacting society critics admired the ease with which he did the honors of his house, and declared that Philip Grantham was a gentleman. The English man of the world has no higher dignity to confer.

No one thought of going away, although the crowd began to be stifling, but an English crowd is ready to endure anything in order to contemplate at close quarters the celebrity of the moment. The lion that they were expecting to roar for them this evening was General Sabaroff, the *pièce de résistance* of the evening.

Philip began to fear that the General had been detained by some unforeseen business, and would not put in an appearance after all. He had not sent out invitations "to meet General Sabaroff," but he had told a great many of his guests beforehand that he expected him; one person had told another; and it came to much the same thing.

He caught sight of De Lussac, who threw him an appealing little glance which plainly said,

"Come to my rescue." He found the young diplomat in the toils of Mrs. Van der Leyd Smythe. He joined them and led off De Lussac, after having passed the lady on to an old banker who happened to be standing near, alone and negotiable.

"My dear fellow," said De Lussac, "I owe you a debt of gratitude for having extracted me from the clutches of that American mamma. I have had to listen to the history of the noble house of Gampton. Upon my word a lot of those worthy Americans are prouder of their aristocratic alliances than of the brave pioneers who founded the United States. They would sell all the shirt-sleeves that felled the forests of America for the coat-of-arms of some ancestor ennobled, a few centuries ago, for something which to-day would perhaps be rewarded with a few years' penal servitude."

"Snobbishhess," said Philip, "is a disease that one meets with in all Anglo-Saxons, but with terrible complications in certain Americans .... I almost expected the Minister of War. His lordship promised me he would come."

"If I were you," replied De Lussac, "I would not count upon him. I know heis very busy today. Special order tosend to Woolwich Arsenal; a message of congratulation to telegraph to the Sirdar on his victory at Atbara; orders to send to various regiments to hold themselves in readiness to set out for India—it appears there are rather disquieting news in the Northwest; a consultation with the Commander-in-Chief; a

Cabinet Council. Besides which, I fancy, he has promised to speak to-night at a meeting of the Peace Association at the Queen's Hall; the ubiquity of some of you Englishmen is simply prodigious."

"A fine programme," said Philip, "a well-filled day, indeed—I should have been pleased to receive his congratulations. Oh, he must be vexed to have been, so to speak, the cause of the refusal I have met with in my own country. Why did they refuse my shell? I should have been prouder of my invention if I had been able to insure the advantages of it to my motherland."

"My dear fellow, the English do not invent; they buy the inventions of outsiders when they are successful. They looked upon the inventor of the Suez Canal as a dangerous lunatic; to turn him from his project, they went so far as to rake up an old theory of Herodotus, that the Red Sea and the Mediterranean were on different levels. At the present day they hold four millions' worth of stock in the concern, and would only like to have the lot. The fact is, if ever England should meet with a great reverse, if ever she comes to grief, she will have only her vanity and self-confidence to thank."

"Our security is so great."

"I know that," said De Lussac, laughing—"your volunteers can insure their lives without paying any extra premium. By-the-by, General Sabaroff is in London. He says he has come over to consult a certain oculist. You may be sure,

dear boy, that the eye he is concerned about is the one he means to keep on you."

"I know he is in town—I expect him to-night."

"I heard that just now in the other room—you lose no time."

De Lussac drew Philip towards the landing, which was clear of people for the moment.

"With the General, I don't see that you need make a secret of your shell. Russia is our ally; it is to our advantage that she should possess the best possible weapons; and I don't believe the French government would have any objection to Russia's profiting by your invention."

"Really?" said Philip, anxiously—"nor do I. I had already thought of it in that light myself, I confess."

"Well, you are a gallant man, I must say, to leave me in the lurch like that," cried Mrs. Van der Leyd Smythe, who now came up. "You went off just as I was going to introduce you to three prominent American women who are dying to make your acquaintance."

"Well, then, by all means, let us go and save their lives," said De Lussac.

"One of them," said his companion, as she led him towards the small drawing-room, "is a well-known literary woman, another is a celebrated public speaker, and the other—"

"Oh, please," exclaimed De Lussac, "can't you introduce me to some pretty woman who has never done anything at all?"

A servant, who had just come up-stairs, an-

nounced, in a loud voice, "His Excellency General Sabaroff."

The name passed from mouth to mouth, and there was a general lull in the conversation; the crowd surged towards the door, and with frantic cranings of the neck endeavored to get a glimpse of the new arrival.

Dora had recognized him at once. He had not changed. Sabaroff, on his side, as soon as he caught sight of Dora at the top of the staircase, had exclaimed, inwardly: "It is she after all—I was told right—it is my lovely English girl of Monte Carlo."

Not a look nor a movement of Sabaroff or of Dora had escaped Philip: "It is the same man," he said to himself—"they recognize each other."

He moved towards the General.

"Your Excellency is very good to have come," he said.

And, leading him to where Dora was standing, he went through with an introduction.

Sabaroff bowed, kissed Dora's hand respectfully, and addressed a few commonplace words to her to excuse himself for coming so late.

General Ivan Sabaroff, Minister of War to his Majesty the Czar and Autocrat of all the Russias, was forty-five years of age, but, thanks to the military bearing which always rejuvenates a man's appearance by a few years, he looked scarcely forty. The ladies declared at once that he was a superb man, and indeed the General had a striking looking appearance.

In the streets of any town, people would have turned round to look at him, the women saying, "What a fine man!" the men, "That is somebody!"

Six feet three in his stockings, broad of shoulder, admirably proportioned, with an iron will written on his face, a herculean strength and remarkable suppleness of body, the head dignified and proudly set on a large neck, the face stern with keen, scrutinizing eyes, straight prominent nose, a sensual mouth, with full, red lips and a thick black mustache twisted into two sharp points, the General looked like a man who might be as redoubtable in a boudoir as on a battle-field. As a matter of fact, he had won many hearts in the former and many victories in the latter. Not being married, he had risked his reputation in the service of women, and his life in the service of his sovereign with more impunity and less hesitation than might otherwise have been the case.

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance—delighted," he said to Dora.

And, in a lower tone, he added, "To renew your acquaintance."

Dora, fearing that the General might give a disagreeable turn to the conversation, hastened to make the first remark that passed through her mind. Nothing betrayed the uneasiness she felt at seeing this man again.

"Has your Excellency been long in London?" she asked of Sabaroff, in her calmest tones.

"A few days only. I have come to consult an

oculist who has been specially recommended to me; and, besides, I have wanted for some time past to visit England and see some of my old friends here."

Sabaroff was a man of the world. He knew that it would be bad form to monopolize his hostess, so he exchanged a few words more with her on trivial topics, and then, accompanied by Philip, entered the drawing-room. He recognized an acquaintance here and there, to whom he bowed. Philip introduced a few people to him, and he was soon the centre of an interested group.

"I hope," said Lord Bentham, "that your Excellency's impressions of the English are favorable. We do our best to make ourselves agreeable to distinguished strangers who visit us."

"And we love to know what they think of us," added Lady Margaret Solby, who had drawn near the General and now placed herself in front of him, that he might have an opportunity of noting at his ease all the good points of a handsome Englishwoman.

"I have never," said Sabaroff to Lord Bentham, "met such kind and hospitable people as your compatriots; abroad they are sometimes haughty and, I may add—"

"Extremely disagreeable," said his lordship, finishing the sentence.

"No, I do not say that. In any case, that could only be on the surface, for at home they are a revelation, really the most charming hosts in the world. To study a man, you must study him

when he is at home. On foreign soil he is playing a part that he only knows imperfectly. He is hampered, and is scarcely a free agent. He is often misunderstood. He is not in his proper setting, much less in his element. I am convinced that when the Creator made man, He must have said to him, 'Thou shalt stay at home.'"

"A commandment which we English have sadly neglected, then," remarked Philip.

"And our Englishwomen, General," questioned Lady Margaret, simpering and attracting his attention by expert fan-wavings to a figure which she knew was above criticism, a figure such as Englishwomen can claim almost a monopoly in.

"Oh, they are beautiful, they are glorious!" said Sabaroff, with the air of a connoisseur; "they are dreams, angels of beauty. What flowing lines, what graceful proportions, what lovely complexions, what fine, delicately carved features! They are vignettes! When an Englishwoman is beautiful, madame, she is beyond competition."

"And when she is ugly?" said Lady Margaret.

"Oh, Heaven help her," said Lorimer, who had just been introduced to Sabaroff, and who, surrounded as he was by pretty women, did not fear to risk a joke at the expense of the absent, who are always out of it.

"I am very proud, General, to hear your Excellency express yourself so warmly on the subject of Englishwomen's beauty," exclaimed Lady Margaret.

"And all those attributes of the beautiful wom-

an," murmured Sabaroff in her ear, "I find united near me."

And with a rapid and comprehensive glance he made an inventory of her charms.

Sabaroff had as keen a scent for game as the huntsmen's dog, and he could recognize a coquette a mile off. He knew just how much he could say to certain women without running the risk of offending them. Lady Margaret flirted her fan, as every woman should do in such a circumstance, made a profound curtsey to the General, and from behind her fan shot at him, out of the corners of her eyes, the invitation of the flirt, which seems to promise so much, but which means so little. I think it was George Sand who wittily said, "The flirt is a woman who signs a bill with the firm intention of not honoring her signature."

In the centre of a neighboring group, Sir Benjamin Pond was holding forth on commerce, politics, the theatre, and fine arts—all subjects were within the domain of this pompous personage with the white waistcoat.

"Yes, the Ministry ought to be impeached for having allowed such an acquisition to go out of the country. We are the richest and most enterprising people in the world, but the most stupid, the most obstinate, and the slowest to adopt new ideas"—he looked round him at the rooms. "What a house he has, this lucky dog! Six months ago he was living in a little shanty in St. John's Wood. What luxury! Shells pay better than painting. Why, there is Mr. Lorimer; my congratulations;

your play is a master-piece; you have taken London by storm! Oh, but for taking the world by storm, give me the invention of our friend Grantham. That's a *bon-mot*, and not a bad one either."

"What a donkey!" thought Lorimer.

"His shell fell on us like a bomb, eh? Ah, ha, ha"; and as he laughed his loud guffaw, his white waistcoat kept time.

Lorimer slipped away and returned to Dora's side. Pond rejoined him almost immediately.

"Mrs. Grantham, Lady Pond has the greatest desire to see the famous picture."

"What famous picture?" asked Dora.

"Why, the one that all London is talking of—the one I so much wanted to buy six months ago."

"You remember," said Lorimer, "36 by 50"—

"Oh, of course. You can see it in the adjoining room, at the end of the small drawing-room."

"Thanks!"

And he set off in the direction indicated.

"Always that picture," said Dora to Lorimer; "my head is dazed; why do we not go to supper and put an end to this? Hello! What is that frantic applause for? . . . Listen, they are going on with it, they are encoring something. What can it be all about?"

Lorimer pressed through the crowd a little, and then came back to Dora.

"You may count upon something spicy," said he; "it is Mimi Latouche, once the darling of Paris, now all the rage in London. Did you ask her here to-night?"

"I asked her — that is to say, the impresario who has charge of my programme sent her."

"Don't apologize; Mimi is all the go; it is who shall have her; and I suppose you ought to consider yourself lucky to be able to serve her up to your guests. You used to live in an artistic circle, that you could charm with a Beethoven quartet. Now you move in a set where classical music would clear your drawing-room as rapidly as a raid of police would a gambling den."

Mimi Latouche had just finished her second song. There was a fresh sound of applause, and cries of "Bravo!" were heard as she left the small drawing-room accompanied by De Lussac, and followed by half a dozen young men. She passed in front of Dora, and brought up near the door by De Lussac.

"*Hein!* George, don't you think I knock 'em with my songs!"

"They are enchanted with you, you electrify them. Your songs are awfully jolly, as they say here—light, crisp, and so daring; but these people have not understood, and if they had, it would not matter; they will applaud, when it is done in a foreign language, a thing that they would not tolerate a moment in their own."

"Your English people, my boy, are hypocrites. When I am in the bill at *Les Ambassadeurs*, the place is always full of English — my songs are *canaille*, aren't they?—really *canaille*. The English like that kind of thing. They give me ovations at the Pavilion every night, and I get bouquets

by the bushel. Why, old chappie, since I took up the *canaille* line I have been making my four hundred pounds a week. I have an offer of ten thousand pounds to appear in New York for six weeks. Would you believe it? I say, George, look what I found in my box at the Pav. to-night"; and she showed De Lussac a lovely bouquet of white orchids.

"Superb!" exclaimed the young man.

"Yes, old boy, but look what there is inside it."

So saying, she drew out a handsome bracelet of rubies and diamonds.

"Exquisite," said De Lussac; "is it the price of laxity hidden in the emblem of chastity? It is a diplomatist who sent you that. Flowers have often served as Cupid's letter-box."

"Hush! it is from Sabaroff. The bracelet is worth four hundred pounds, at least."

"Sabaroff? Why, he is here."

"I know that very well," said Mimi; "look at him over there talking to the lady in pearl-gray."

"I see him; he is gazing her out of countenance," said De Lussac.

"Out of countenance? Out of corset, you mean. Sabaroff has a way of staring at a woman; it makes her quite nervous to be near him if she has on evening dress."

"My dear Mimi, I did not know you were so easily shocked."

"Oh, when I say a woman I don't mean myself—that sort of thing doesn't affect me, you may imagine. I am quite at his disposition—and

yours too, yours especially—you are perfectly mashing to-night. After all these Englishmen, dear boy, it is a treat to look at a Frenchman; to be looked at by one—dessert after dinner."

Dora had heard it all. Her indignation was at boiling point.

"I am going to turn that creature out," she said to Lorimer.

"Oh, don't, I beg of you, Dora," replied Lorimer. "It might make a scandal—that woman would not hesitate to insult you."

But Dora was determined to get rid of Mimi, and, addressing her, said, "I will not trouble you to sing any more, mademoiselle; I will send you your check to-morrow." So saying, she turned her back on Mimi.

"Much obliged," said the latter. And, turning to De Lussac, she added: "Well, I never! She wants to dismiss me. Did you ever hear such cheek? Much obliged, but I'm starving hungry. I'm off to the buffet—your arm, George."

She went down with De Lussac.

Lorimer began to be seriously concerned about Dora. She was as pale as death, and seemed every now and then on the point of fainting. She had been going through tortures, but the thing which had dealt her a terrible blow was a scrap of conversation which she had just heard as she passed through the drawing-room.

"It happens every day, and in the best society," said a man whom she did not recognize. "One constantly sees a man making use of his wife's

attractions to further his own ends. It is called diplomacy."

"In such cases the wife is often an innocent agent."

"That is true, but the husband is none the less reprehensible for that," added a third voice.

Of whom had they been speaking? There was a singing in her ears. Great Heaven! was it of her? She closed her eyes and thought she was going to lose consciousness.

Lorimer took it upon him to go to Philip and tell him that Dora was tired and unwell, and that it would perhaps be unwise to expose her to any more fatigue that evening.

"Thanks, dear old fellow," said Philip, "it will be all over in an hour or less; we are going to supper in a moment."

Lorimer had found Philip engaged in describing his shell to Sabaroff.

Philip went at once to Dora; her pallor frightened him. Taking her hands in his own, he said:

"Well, darling, how do you feel? You look tired, keep up your courage; we are going to supper now. In an hour's time you will be free to rest—you must not get up to-morrow; the next day you will feel nothing more of it. Everything has gone beautifully, everybody is delighted with the evening they have passed. The General is interested in my shell — I am convinced that Russia will offer me a fortune for it; but why do you look at me in that way?"

"I am tired to death; I don't feel well; I cannot go on any longer."

"Have courage, dear; it is nearly over. The hour has come when you can do great things for me; a wife can be of such a help to her husband —with a little diplomacy."

Dora shuddered—it was the phrase which she had just heard. The room seemed to swim round as she heard Philip repeat the words.

"What do you want me to do?"

"Why, nothing very difficult for you: help me with a few smiles; invite the General to come and see us sometimes. Why do you look at me in that strange fashion?"

"You want me to ask that man to come and see me as a friend after what I have told you?"

"Why not?" said Philip. "Come, be a good girl; when I have sold my invention, I will never think of anything but you and my painting. I shall install myself in the most sumptuous studio that ever inspired an artist. Forgive me my thirst for a little more wealth. I shall soon have quenched it forever. You will help me, won't you?"

"Once more, what is it you would have me to do?"

"We are going to supper—you will take General Sabaroff's arm."

"No, no! not that," said Dora, with an imploring look at Philip.

"Yes, yes! you cannot refuse. You are the hostess and he the principal guest. I expect you to go down with him."

Sabaroff had drawn near to them; Dora could refuse no longer. She bent her head and said to Philip—

"Very well."

"Will your Excellency offer your arm to my wife?"

Dora mastered her emotion, her weakness, and her indignation. Many eyes were upon her; not a moment's hesitation was possible. She lifted her head proudly, took the proffered arm and went down to supper.

XII

THE HUSBAND, THE WIFE, AND THE OTHER

AFTER going through the unaccustomed and fatiguing function, which we have tried to describe in the two preceding chapters, Dora took a day or two's rest in the house. During this time of repose, which her husband had specially enjoined her to indulge in, she resolved to limit her social relations, and consecrate most of her time to her child, who was beginning to cause her some anxiety. Eva was not strong, and it became more and more evident from her frequent complaints that a delicacy of the throat was constitutional in the child. She, who up to this time passed her days playing in the open air, had now to be content with a sedate walk in the Park, which she could only take hatted, gloved, and accompanied by a servant. Good-bye to the romps and scampers on the lawn and the merry hours of delicious freedom she used to enjoy so much with her little friends. Children are only happy and gay where there is no atmosphere of restraint.

Dora continued to take an interest in household matters, kept her house with scrupulous care and with economy, so as to avoid or, at any rate, re-

tard the financial wreck which she believed to be ahead. She put into requisition all her housewifely arts learned in the happy school of their early married life, and all the ingenious tastefulness of the artistic woman she was, in order that Philip should not discover that she had conceived a complete distaste for the existence which she was forced to lead, nor accuse her of trying to keep aloof from the life of fashionable society.

The unhappy woman was wearied and worn by her secret struggles, and almost crazy at the thought that her husband's heart had ceased to beat for her. The more she thought of that which was going on, the wider the chasm which separated her from Philip appeared to grow.

She had reached a point at which the question arose in her mind whether Philip, in his craving for the success of his new plans, did not seek to push her into the arms of General Sabaroff.

That revolting thought filled her with such horror that she dared not entertain it long. "No," she said to herself, "a man does not change so suddenly as that; he does not take six years to reveal himself, and then, at a day's notice, become transformed from an affectionate husband, an honorable, upright, and devoted man, into a nameless scoundrel." When she argued with herself, she arrived at the conclusion that she must be mad to have allowed such an idea to enter her brain, and yet, drive it away as she would, the horrible thought assailed her more and more persistently.

Dora was above all things a woman of sound

intelligence. After mature reflection she traced for herself a line of conduct that seemed to her the only wise one. First, she took a firm resolution never to address any more reproaches to Philip. Things had gone too far for recriminations to have any effect upon him. She was clear-sighted enough to know that a husband's vagrant affection is not won back by reprimands and reproaches, but only by sweetness, persuasion, and diplomacy. Her greatest fear was that her temper might sour, and against this possibility she set herself to watch most rigorously. She did her best to be attractive, and cultivated a gayety that should help her to break down the cold barrier that seemed to have fixed itself between her and this man who had so detached himself from her. She took more care than ever of her appearance, and called all her taste into play to help her set off her beauty to best advantage.

One evening, when she was dressing for dinner, she remembered that Philip had said to her, before the arrival of their guests at their memorable evening party: "How beautiful you are! How I should love to have you all to myself this evening!" Women seldom forget a remark of that sort. She put on the same dress that had charmed Philip so much, and went down-stairs looking her loveliest. After dinner they passed the evening in Dora's boudoir, where she allowed her husband to smoke his cigarette, and smoked one herself when the temptation took her. Philip took no notice of his wife's attire; no remark, no compli-

ment passed his lips. Tired of the *tête-à-tête*, he took up a book and yawned over it for a while, and about eleven o'clock went out for a breath of air. "It is hopeless; I am done for," said Dora, when Philip had left her, and she burst into tears.

What had come over this man, who thus caused such suffering to a wife—young, beautiful, dowered with all the gifts that nature can lavish upon a woman, and for whom he would certainly have been ready to lay down his life, if necessary?

Lorimer was right; it was a special case, and he, as a psychologist, watched its development with interest. The specialist declares that a man absorbed in speculations is, naturally, fatally indifferent to all the other affairs of life. Philip had been attacked with what we will call mental absorption, a sort of bewitchment from which nothing could exorcise him, so to speak, but some great shock, powerful and unforeseen.

All the ideas which Dora had taken into her head were false. Philip adored his wife. He was blinded by a thick veil, which he had not the courage to tear from his eyes. He was so sure of attaining his aim in a few days that he said to himself: "I shall soon be able to repair all my faults. A little while and everything will go smoothly again. I shall be free, master of myself once more, and there will be half a century in front of me, in which to compensate Dora for the anxiety I am causing her now." He was honest, and had only feelings of profound love and respect

for his wife; but to a looker-on—to Dora above all—the fact was difficult to believe in, it must be confessed.

In order to keep up close relations with Sabaroff, Philip had asked him to sit for his portrait. The General had accepted, and came three or four times a week to pose in the room which served Philip as a studio. Dora resigned herself to this humiliation. "He has not yet finished my portrait," she said to herself, "but that man's he will finish fast enough." Not once, however, did she make a remark to Philip on the matter.

Every Thursday Sabaroff came to call on Dora, who received him politely, but coldly. On several occasions he found himself alone with her, and Philip never thought of joining them. He ended by believing himself encouraged by Philip in the assiduity of his visits to Dora. This woman so impressed him that he never once ventured on a glib gallantry, scarcely even an ordinary compliment. He felt himself on new ground, and not thoroughly at home in the presence of this being, who seemed never to have been soiled by even an impure glance. Before her he became almost timid, he the daring Don Juan of Courts, who made light of women whose conquests he had so often found easy, and for whom he felt the sentiment of the Oriental, a sentiment made up of condescension and fierce and short-lived passion, followed by contempt. Not more than one woman had ever been able to boast of having been his mistress longer than a week. And yet he had

loved once in his life, loved with a noble passion, a young girl with a face full of lofty beauty, eyes in whose look were depths of loyalty and truth, and on whose brow purity sat enthroned. And that woman, whom he had thus loved, whose image had never become completely effaced from his memory—that woman was Dora! whom he here found again lovelier still than in by-gone years, and married to a man who was evidently absorbed in his invention and his calculations.

Sabaroff watched Philip and Dora attentively. He could not discover in their conduct towards each other any of the thousand and one little familiarities which always exist between two people living happily side by side under one roof. He also thought that Philip opened his house to him with an insistence almost suspicious, and yet Dora, not only gave him no encouragement, but seemed to behave with a studied reserve when in his society. He concluded that she either felt complete indifference for him, or that she hid her sentiments under a very clever mask. The more he tried to understand, the more he lost himself in conjecture. In his estimation, Philip was either a fool who neglected his wife, or an intriguing fellow who sought to make use of her to attain his own ends. One thing at all events was clear in his mind, and that was that there existed between Philip and Dora no sentiment of affection, much less of love. He resolved to await a favorable occasion, and not to decide upon a plan of action until he was surer of his ground.

Philip had finished his portrait, and every one who saw it declared that no modern portrait-painter since the death of Frank Holl had done such a fine piece of work. Dora, mortified and stung by jealousy, could not help admiring her husband's master-piece, and said to him: "Since you wish for wealth, here is the means of attaining it; with a talent such as yours you could soon command a thousand pounds for a portrait, and paint ten or twelve a year."

His portrait finished, Sabaroff had less excuse for constant calls at the house. He had to content himself with his weekly visits on Dora's day. However, one day, when he knew Philip to be absent and Dora at home, he presented himself at the house; but Dora sent word that she was not well, and regretted to be unable to receive him. On the evening of the same day he received an invitation to dine with Philip and Dora, and accepted it by return of post. The dinner was for the 15th of December.

Sabaroff's report upon Philip's shell had long since been sent to St. Petersburg, and as he had marked it "Urgent and specially recommended," he expected a reply at any moment.

The day after Philip had sent to ask the General to dinner, he received from him the following note:

"DEAR MR. GRANTHAM,—I have just received a letter from St. Petersburg, from which I learn that the commission charged by his Imperial

Majesty, my august master, to examine my report, and that of the Council of Artillery upon the experiments made with your shell, will sit on the 15th of December, and will send me a wire the same evening to acquaint me with their decision. Thus I may possibly, as you see, have a piece of good news to give you at dessert.

"Pray, dear sir, present my most respectful compliments to Mrs. Grantham, and accept for yourself the assurance of my devoted regards.

"IVAN SABAROFF."

Philip, overcome with joy, ran to show Dora Sabaroff's letter.

"At last," he cried, "we are near the goal. Ten days more, and I shall know whether they take my shell or not. And then, from that day—Heaven be thanked—no more invention on the brain, no more anxiety, no more worry; I shall be rich, and I shall get at my work again, the work that you love. Only, you know, I shall take things easily. I shall not work now to pay the tradespeople; I shall paint seriously, I tell you."

Seeing a ray of joy pass over Dora's face, he added: "You see, I do not intend to throw all overboard. Look here, we have been married six years, and you don't know me yet. That's the fact of the matter."

His gayety and enthusiasm of other days seemed to have come back again, and Dora's heart leaped within her at the sight. She went so far as to encourage him in his present hopes, but more

especially applauded the resolution that he appeared to have taken to return to his old work. Philip took her in his arms and kissed her more tenderly than he had done for six months past.

"After all," said Dora to herself, "my suspicions were perhaps absurd; there was no foundation for them. I have had a bad dream, a horrible nightmare—I must fling it off. It is all over—patience, patience. Just a few days longer."

Next time Sabaroff called, Dora received him with less coldness and reserve. She was cheerful, amiable, and appeared almost glad to see him. This new attitude delighted him. There was no mistaking the looks he gave her; his whole body betrayed the feelings of this man for Dora.

"After all," she thought, "in a few days he will be back in St. Petersburg, and I shall have finished for ever with his Excellency the War Minister of his Majesty the Czar of all the Russias."

On the 13th, Philip received a telegram calling him to Paris at once. He was begged to spend a few hours at the arsenal of artillery with the Ministre de la Guerre.

He could not refuse. He wired immediately that he would comply without delay.

Dora naturally proposed to send at once to General Sabaroff, asking him to dine with them another evening instead of on the 15th.

"No, no," said Philip, "I shall leave Paris the day after to-morrow by the nine o'clock train in the morning. It is the mail, and I shall arrive in London at half-past four; even allowing for a

couple of hours of possible delay, I should still reach home in good time. Besides," he said, glancing at a newspaper, "the barometer is rising, the sea is good, there is no danger of bad weather and delays."

It was in vain for Dora to persist; Philip would not consent to any change in the arrangement.

"My dear child, one cannot put off a Minister at a moment's notice when one has asked him to dinner. I would rather refuse to go to Paris, and you know it would be impossible to do that. I really must respond to this request, which is as natural as it is cordial. I owe some consideration to those good Frenchmen for buying my shell of me; and, no doubt, it is to ask my advice on some matter that they want me at the arsenal in a hurry. And then, you know, I have another reason for specially wanting to meet General Sabaroff here on the 15th—it is on the 15th that I am to hear Russia's decision."

Dora saw that it was useless to argue the point any further.

Philip's preparations for departure were rapidly made; in a few minutes he was ready to set out for Paris. He sprang into a cab and reached Charing Cross ten minutes before the eleven o'clock mail train was ready to start. At seven in the evening, he was in Paris.

XIII

A CRUEL ORDEAL

On the 15th of December, at eight o'clock in the evening, Philip had not arrived home.

General Sabaroff came at the hour appointed. Great was his surprise to find only Dora and her sister in the drawing-room. He had been invited to dine quite informally, but he expected to see at least two or three other guests. Far from regretting their non-appearance, he congratulated himself on his good luck, and thanked his hostess for showing him this mark of friendly intimacy. It occurred to him that, perhaps, Dora's sister would not stay long after dinner. When Dora, humiliated and mortified, explained to him that Philip had not returned from Paris, she was very naturally profuse in her apologies. Sabaroff concluded that a *tête-à-tête* had been arranged. "At any rate," he thought to himself, "I shall soon be clear on that point."

Dinner was announced, and Gabrielle went down to the dining-room, followed by Dora, to whom Sabaroff had offered his arm.

The dinner proceeded, excellent and well served in itself, but a wearisome function to all three

partakers of it. Dora was too much a prey to the most painful reflections to play the hostess with her usual grace. Gabrielle, at no time a conversationalist of any brilliancy, detached as she was from social pleasures by duty and inclination, sat almost mute. Sabaroff himself suffered from the constraint which the presence of this hospital nurse imposed upon him. He could never dissociate her from her semi-religious habiliments, which inspired him with an enforced respect. Dora, feeling stranded and forlorn, wrapped herself in a reserve of manner that was unmistakable, and Gabrielle, as the dinner proceeded, grew more and more a prey to vague alarms while she watched the burning glances that Sabaroff threw at Dora. The dinner was of the simplest, and lasted, at the utmost, an hour, but to the poor girl it seemed unending.

At last they were all three on their feet again, and she and Dora were moving to the drawing-room, where she would be able to speak freely to her sister, perhaps, and ease her mind.

"We will leave you to your cigar, General," said Dora, taking the lead into the doorway.

The General bowed, and, when they had gone, he seated himself again, lit a cigar, and fell into a revery.

As soon as Dora reached the drawing-room she threw herself into her sister's arms. "I am so glad that you came this evening," she said. "Eva is not at all well. The dear child seems to get less and less strong as she grows older. I often

feel quite concerned about her. She has been feverish all day to-day, and you know that when she has the slightest ailment she always wants Auntie to nurse her. The very sight of your cap and apron is as potent as a soothing draught, I do believe. I have just sent a servant to the hospital to know if I can keep you till to-morrow morning —and I was glad to have you make a third at dinner this evening, Philip being absent. It was an inspiration that brought you to the house. But you look quite depressed; your face, usually so cheerful, so gay, is sad. You seemed strange all through dinner. Now, what is the matter?"

Gabrielle looked at Dora strangely. For a long time she hesitated before answering; then, seeing that Dora seemed to insist, she looked her sister straight in the face, and said:

"Dora, dear, why is General Sabaroff dining here to-night when Philip is away from home? There, since you insist, it is out."

Dora felt offended, but did not betray her feeling.

"Ah, you see," she said, smiling; "I knew there was something troubling you. Well, you must know that, a few days ago, Philip invited General Sabaroff to dine with us to-night quite *en famille*, and he accepted. The day before yesterday, Philip received a letter calling him to Paris immediately, on business connected with the shell—his invention, you know. He set out by the morning train that very day, telling me to expect him back about five o'clock to-day, and I cannot account

for his not having returned yet. I had a letter from him this morning in which he said that the matter was settled yesterday, and that he would take the nine o'clock train from Paris this morning. I had suggested putting off General Sabaroff, but he would not hear of my doing that, as he was sure of arriving home three hours before dinner. Now, don't look at me any longer with that tragedy air, or you'll upset my gravity, dear. One would think you suspected me of arranging a *tête-à-tête* dinner with the man. Haven't I already told you how glad I was that you came in time to sit down with us? But how absurd all this is! One would really imagine I was here on my defence. Enough of this nonsense! And now, before General Sabaroff has finished his smoke, I will run up and see how my darling is and tell her that you are here."

"Dora, one moment; I must speak to you; I feel I must. Do not be offended with me, nor think me prying and foolish, will you, if I seem to meddle in what you may say does not concern me; but, dear, I cannot keep it to myself any longer. It makes me so miserable to see what is going on in this house—tell me, what does it all mean? You do not answer me; you dare not tell me the truth."

"My dear sister," said Dora, "I have nothing to hide from you." And, she added, with sudden resolution, looking Gabrielle straight in the face, "Love has deserted the house—that is the truth, a truth which will soon kill me, I hope."

"But whose fault is it?" rejoined Gabrielle. "This General Sabaroff, why is he so often here? I cannot help noticing the frequency of his visits, and I cannot help seeing Philip's sad look and your altered manner towards him. Again, what does it all mean? He is suffering, I am sure of it; your coldness towards him is distressing him deeply. All your amiability seems to be reserved for this Russian, whom I heard you call profligate; the last person in the world that I should have thought you would hoard your smiles for. How can you turn a cold face to such a husband as yours for such a man as this?"

"Really you are very observant, and your conclusions are most charitable, my dear sister—of charity," said Dora, who was beginning to stifle with misery and indignation.

"Yes," continued Gabrielle, not listening to her sister, "a husband who has given you a place in his heart which one only gives to God. Ah, do not attempt to contradict me. Your love for Philip is dying, if not only dead. Take care, Dora; Philip still loves you. He knows nothing of what is going on. It is not too late. Forbid your door to this man before harm comes of it. I beseech you, put a stop to General Sabaroff's too evident attentions to you."

This was more than Dora could stand. This woman, whose pride would not allow her to confide her sorrow to another soul, was roused to her very depths, and, seizing her sister's arms, she said to her—

"My loving husband, who gives me a place in his heart which should be reserved for God alone, is ready to sell my smiles for five hundred thousand roubles—do you hear what I tell you? After having been false to Art, that mistress of whom I should have been proud to be jealous, he does not seek to be false to me—that would be nothing compared to the crime he is about to commit. A husband! ah, faugh! There, I have unloaded my heart; I feel better."

"Dora, what are you saying? You are mad."

"I tell you that he knows everything and that you know nothing. It is Philip who forces me to receive this man in our intimate circle. It is he who throws open to General Sabaroff my dining-room, my drawing-room, and who, one of these days, will lend him the key of my bedroom. It is he who invited him to dine here to-night; certainly not I."

"But," said Gabrielle, "why is Philip not here?"

"Ah," exclaimed Dora, "well you may ask—that is just what I should like to know."

Dora looked at Gabrielle, who stood dumfounded. "Never mind; don't listen to me. I scarcely know what I am talking about," she added, passing her hand over her forehead. "I am losing my head. No, no, my suppositions are impossible. He must have met with an accident. There can be no other explanation."

Dora succeeded in mastering her emotion, and, fixing Gabrielle with a strange, half-haggard gaze, she said:

"You must not believe a word of what I have said; you don't, do you? And now I must go to Eva. The dear child will be so delighted to know you are here."

She threw herself into her sister's arms and kissed her tenderly several times.

Gabrielle stood petrified. She had long guessed that there was no more happiness in her sister's home, but she had not had the least idea that things had gone so far as to lead Dora to despise Philip. Gabrielle had always felt a mixture of love and admiring respect for her sister; in her estimation, Dora was the ideal woman; so much superior to all the other women she had known that she could not believe that the pedestal upon which she had placed her could possibly crumble to atoms.

Dora returned after a few minutes. She seemed uneasy, still more upset than she had been when she left the drawing-room.

"Eva is asking for you," she said to Gabrielle; "she complains of sore throat now, and appears to be feverish, but I hope it is nothing worse than a cold coming. Go and sit with the dear child. If she should grow worse during the evening, send for the doctor at once. I trust her to your hands."

Kissing Gabrielle once more, she tried to smile, and added:

"Don't distress yourself about me. I shall be able to join you presently. General Sabaroff has, I hope, enough tact to make him feel the awk-

wardness of the situation. He will retire at once. There, go now, dear."

Dora, as soon as Gabrielle had left the drawing-room, was seized with an intangible terror. Doubt and uncertainty had undermined her spirits. She no longer felt her usual dauntless courage. She was afraid of being alone, afraid of the unknown, afraid of the man who, at any moment, might enter the room; but above all was her thought for the child. "My poor little treasure! going to be ill perhaps!" A horrible thought flashed across her mind and wrung a cry from her lips. "Oh, no, no, my God, not *that!* no, not if there is justice in Heaven!" Calming herself with an effort, she went on: "Ah, if it was not for the child, I would leave this house to-day; I would go no matter where; take a few brushes, and earn my bread with them. It would be hard if I could not turn my work to some account and lead a life independent of every one. Oh, to live anywhere, to live anyhow, dear Heaven, rather than go on with this existence, which revolts me and is crushing me. Oh, how lonely it is! how silent the house is! The very air chokes me — where is Philip now? What has happened that he is not here? What is he doing? Oh, my head burns so! I will send up for Gabrielle—no, she must stay with Eva. What to do? Send a telegram to Lorimer, and ask him to come quickly?—no, I should have to give explanations. Beg the General to excuse me; tell him I am not well and am obliged to retire."

She was interrupted in her reflections by the entrance of a servant who brought a telegram. Feverishly she broke open the envelope and read: "Missed nine o'clock train; started at noon, and will be with you at eight o'clock."

She looked at the timepiece. It was ten o'clock, and Philip had not yet arrived. The telegram was from Dover. What could have happened since? "Then, Philip may perhaps not be here at all to-night," she said to herself; "I shall be forced to pass the rest of the evening with General Sabaroff. Is it an accident—or a diabolical plot? No, no, the thought is too horrible. I must, I will chase it out of my mind. And yet—oh, there is only one thing to be done. Yes, yes, no more hesitation; I will finish with the General, and to-night. No more shall Philip accuse me of not helping him. I will get Sabaroff's signature, if power of mine can do it. I will be extra amiable to him—repulsive task! Philip shall have his beloved money, for which he has broken my heart, and then—then I have done with him forever."

When she lifted her eyes, Sabaroff stood before her. Immersed in her own thoughts, she had not seen him come in. At once rising, she collected her ideas rapidly and scarcely showed sign of embarrassment.

"I must apologize again to you for my husband, General," she said. "I have just had a wire from him saying he missed the nine o'clock train in Paris, but that he had left at noon and would be

here at eight. I am very alarmed. It is ten o'clock. I fear there must have been an accident, for I can explain his absence in no other way. It is really most unfortunate, and I don't know how to apologize enough. I feel quite confused."

The smile which crossed Sabaroff's face at these words was particularly offensive to Dora.

The General was not long coming to the point. When he had entered the drawing-room and found Dora alone, he had instantly taken his resolution. Here was his opportunity.

"As far as I am concerned," he said, "there is nothing unfortunate in the situation—I should rather call it fortunate for me. So, please, do not apologize. I can never get enough of your society. Every day on which I do not see you is dull, weary, wasted. To be allowed to see you is my sweetest privilege, to see you alone my dearest joy."

"Really, General, spare me, please," said Dora, striving to smile naturally.

"Ah, do not stop me, do not turn away your face. Remember the time when I first met you in the lovely South, and you gave me the happiness of feeling that my society was not displeasing to you. These were golden days! Your fresh young beauty, your clear young eyes and voice made the world new again for me, a travel-worn soldier, already beginning to find the world a tinsel-trimmed hearth with little warmth, and a great deal of ashes. Weary of the nomadic life of a Russian soldier, I fell to dreaming of another

kind of existence, a sweet, peaceful life at your side. I would have consecrated the rest of my days to the dear task of making you happy. Ambition and glory, I would have said good-bye to all that, for my noblest ambition would have been to reign supreme in your heart. You judged me unworthy, and I have never ceased to mourn the fading of my beloved dream—nay, I mourn it to-day more than ever. If only I had found you happy," he added, insinuatingly.

"You are unwise, General, to talk to me of that winter," rejoined Dora. "Can I ever forget that, thanks to you, one single day, one single hour of it turned me from a light-hearted, innocent, ignorant girl into a woman—innocent still, but no longer ignorant of the sad and degrading side of existence. Ah, in those few moments, I had passed out for ever from the sweet calm garden of girlhood into the dusty crowded highway of the world, and there I saw one of the saddest sides of life—the humiliation and despair of a woman dismissed, cast off by the man who should have passed the rest of his days in shielding her."

"It was not my fault that you overheard my wretched secret; but a foolish *liaison*, which seemed to a strictly nurtured girl so vile a thing, can it, must it make me for ever odious to a sweet and gracious woman who knows the world? How many men have succeeded in keeping on virtue's path altogether? The members of the Young Men's Christian Association are not recruited from among the ranks of our society."

"Does wrong become right by multiplication?" said Dora, who was not sorry to see the turn that the conversation had taken, a turn which would give her the opportunity of making a little sermon that should cool down the ardor of the General. "I shall never be able to understand why the men who belong to what is called Society should not be expected to conduct themselves as honorably as those of the modest middle classes. It is from above that example should come, and, believe me, it will have to come from above, or Society will disappear for want of having fulfilled its mission."

"Well, well, you may be right," said Sabaroff; "but listen to my story. For months, for years, I could not bear to think of all that I had lost in losing you. Was it any wonder that I went half mad and ran into all kinds of excesses? The light of your pure eyes was turned away from me. I tossed about like a rudderless ship, and only my ambition saved me from wreckage of body and soul."

"Does it not seem to you a little cowardly," said Dora, glad to recover the thread of her little sermon; "for a man to lay the blame for such a life at a woman's door, because he would not exercise the self-control that thousands of women have to exercise almost all their lives? Do you think it is only men who feel? Ah, believe me, there are few women who have not had, at some period of their lives, to suffer and be silent, to hold a bursting heart, and go about the daily task,

with its cruel, half-mechanical routine, which leaves the mind free to dwell on all the misery that stirring scenes might help it to forget. Those who give way to their despair, Society mocks at; those who abandon themselves to their passions, society puts outside the pale."

Dora began to feel that she was putting too much heat into her reply. With an attempt at a tone of indifference, she went on:

"But tell me more about that saving grace of ambition, General? It has made you a great and powerful man."

"Great, no; powerful, yes," replied Sabaroff, and he laid an insinuating stress on the word *yes*, which did not escape Dora's notice. "But, of all the satisfaction which my present position of confidence with my imperial master has brought me, nothing is so sweet as the power of doing what I am going to do for you."

"I am so proud you approve of the shell—then you will have it taken up by the Russian government"

"Yes," said Sabaroff, "I have the paper here ready to sign, and am only waiting for a telegram from St. Petersburg, which I have ordered to be brought to me here if it should happen to arrive before ten o'clock."

"My husband will be so glad!"

"Ah, 'my husband will be glad,'" repeated Sabaroff, in a half-mocking tone. "Mrs. Grantham, will *you* be glad? Dora," said he, warming as he proceeded, "do you not realize that what I am

going to do is for your sake, and not for the man who has won the only woman I ever loved?"

On hearing herself called by her Christian name, Dora was indignant.

"General, once more I beg of you, I'm afraid you forget yourself."

At this moment a servant entered the room.

"A telegram for his Excellency," said he. Then he handed the telegram to the General, and retired after receiving Dora's order to bring tea.

Sabaroff read the despatch to Dora: "Approved by Council of War. Final decision left to you. If you yourself approve, offer five hundred thousand roubles."

Dora was standing at the fireplace, with one foot on the fender. Sabaroff, with the telegram in his hand, gave her a look which seemed to say: "When I said *powerful*, you see I was right."

The servant brought the tea, which he placed on a table near Dora, and retired.

Dora poured out two cups.

"No milk, I think—a little rum and some lemon, *à la Russe*?"

"Thank you," said Sabaroff.

He cut himself a slice of lemon, helped himself to rum, and began to sip his tea.

There was an unbroken silence for a couple of minutes.

"You are not offended with me," he resumed. "Ah, forgive me if I have called you by your beautiful first name, your sweet name of Dora; it

is the only one I ever give you in my thoughts. Here is a pansy," he said, opening his pocket-book, "a flower that you dropped at Monte Carlo. There is no Mrs. Grantham for me; there is Dora, the name I cannot forget."

"This man really loved me, then," said Dora to herself, "and loves me still, perhaps." The thought displeased her, but it was not insulting. She thought of the pansies which had come regularly, year after year, on the anniversary of her marriage. Then, if he loved her still, she had everything to fear in this solitary *tête-à-tête*. She resolved to be more than ever on her guard.

"But it is precisely my other name, General, that I would have you remember always," she said, with a calm smile.

"If I thought of that one, I should not be here now; I should never come to this house," said Sabaroff. "I should not be now preparing to sign this paper, which is to enrich still further the man to whom you gave yourself, the man who already possesses the only thing I ever really craved. Shall I sign? Why should I?" said he, drawing from his pocket an envelope containing a blank contract. "What will be my thanks? What is to be my reward?"

"Oh, General," said Dora, nervous but still smiling, "you are too good a patriot to need any incentive but the love of your country."

"No, Mrs. Grantham, that is not enough. I love my country, but I do not love your husband. For you alone I sign. To you I turn for my re-

ward. Ah, let me hear from those lovely lips that you have only kind, pitying thoughts for the man who still worships you and loves you as you are worthy to be loved."

Sabaroff's eyes were lit with a strange fire, and threw burning glances upon Dora. She began to tremble. This man frightened her.

"Of course, General, I am grateful, I" . . . She felt incapable of finishing the phrase. "Must I go through with this?" she thought. "Oh, that I could get rid of this man?"

Sabaroff did not take his eyes off her face. He was striving to read her inmost thoughts.

"I have no resentment," she continued; "I have long ago forgotten what passed between us, and if you will do the same, here is my hand."

Sabaroff unfolded the paper which he had taken from the envelope, placed it on the table, and signed it. Dora was still holding out her hand to him. Sabaroff seized it and drew her close to him.

"Dora," he exclaimed, "my Dora!"

"You forget, once more you forget," she said, freeing herself. "If my husband were here" . . .

"If your husband were here!" cried Sabaroff, with a sneer. "Once for all, is it possible that you do not see the rôle that your husband is playing? Are you indeed so blind? Tell me, does a man encourage a former lover of his wife about his house constantly, a lover who was on the point of becoming her *fiancé*, and who perhaps loves her still? Does he miss the train when he knows that

his wife will be alone with that man for a whole evening? No, my dear Mrs. Grantham, a man misses everything you like to name, but he does not miss such a train as that. Ah, let us have no more of these pretences. You know perfectly well what he is, that husband of yours who missed his train. You know that you have no love left for him, that you only feel the most profound contempt for that man who, to put a fortune in his purse, does not hesitate to play the *mari complaisant.*"

"No, it's impossible, it is not true," cried Dora, suffocating with indignation, "spare me your suppositions."

"You shall not make me believe that you do not despise him. I have watched you both carefully from the first day that I have visited your house. Do not deceive me, do not attempt to deceive yourself. You do not love your husband. I have seen how your noble heart has shrunk from contact with so sordid a nature as he has proved to be in the past few months. He may have loved you once, in his cool, jelly-fish fashion; perhaps you have loved him yourself, but since his new craze for wealth has ousted you from his consideration, except when you are useful to him as a bait, you have hated him—ah, worse than that, you have despised him. You know that he is not worthy of you, who have the soul as well as the body of an angel. No, you are not blind; you are not a child, to sit down tamely under his treatment of you. Be a woman, take a woman's revenge.

Only give me a tithe of the love he has held so lightly and I will be your slave, your adoring slave to my dying day. Dora, I love you," he cried as he advanced towards her.

"I can listen to no more of this. You have tried my patience too far already. I thank you, in my husband's name, General, for having signed this paper, but I don't feel well; have pity on me. You have before you a woman full of gratitude for what you have done; it would not be generous to take advantage of it to press your company upon me in my present state. Please leave me now, please."

"Leave you! leave you! Ah, ah! And this is my reward. Now that you have obtained all you want you dismiss me. Dora, take care. You are too intelligent, too much of a woman, not to see that my love for you has come back to me redoubled, that it blinds me, makes me mad, and that your resistance only adds fuel to the fire."

"Go, I beseech you, at once," exclaimed Dora, now thoroughly alarmed; "go, I command you. Nothing will force me to listen to you any longer —I tell you I am suffering tortures; you say that you love me, then spare me and go."

"So, then," said he, reproachfully, "you let me see you, let me come here almost day after day until I cannot live away from you, and then, when you have done your despicable husband's work, you dismiss me with a *many thanks, good-bye.* No, Dora," he added, raising his voice, "I will not be dismissed so. Look at me well," he said, seizing

her arm, "do I look like a man who can be so lightly played with?"

"Let me go, you hurt me," cried Dora, distracted with indignation, "how dare you treat me so?"

"How dare I?" said Sabaroff. "You wonder how I dare? Ah, wonder rather that I kept silent so long with your beautiful face before me, your voice and eyes bewitching me, your lips so near, all your loveliness making mad riot in my pulses? What do you think I am made of? Does one take a starving wretch to see a banquet spread, and, when he has just begun to eat, then cast him out, because he dares to say he is hungry still? Does one offer rich wine to a weary traveller, and, when he has taken but one sip from the cup, dash it from his lips and bid him begone? In your presence, Dora, I am craving for your love."

"Philip, where are you?" cried the poor woman, wildly, and feeling more dead than alive.

She made towards the door, but Sabaroff intercepted her passage.

"Dora," said he, "why keep up this farce any longer? Be honest. Unmask yourself, for I am convinced you are wearing a mask. Why do you call your husband? You know that he is not here, and you must know only too well why he is not here. Your husband has kept away to-night that you may be alone with me. You cannot but despise him, a creature who, when he had won it, knew not how to value the prize I crave in vain.

And now that I have found you suffering tortures at his callousness, you will not let me tell you how I love you—passionately, madly! Ah, since it is he who throws you into my arms, come and make your home there; you shall never repent the step—I swear it!"

"Ah, enough, enough, spare me any more indignities," cried Dora, with head proudly uplifted. "General Sabaroff! leave—leave this house instantly."

So saying, she made a movement towards the bell.

"Dora," cried Sabaroff, seizing her in his strong arms.

She struggled, and finished by freeing herself from his grasp.

"Go this moment, I tell you. You have treated me as you would not dare treat a servant-girl in a low lodging-house, you have treated me as if you took me for a Mimi Latouche — you are a coward!"

Dora was nearly at the end of her strength. She was wild, at bay, without power to cry for help. A coquette would have known how to defend herself. Knowing to what she exposes herself, the coquette always prepares a line of retreat before engaging in the battle; but a woman as pure as Dora is almost defenceless in the presence of a man who has burned his ships and who intends to stop at nothing; she has no weapons for such a contest. Dora was paralyzed with fright and indignation. She made a last and supreme

effort to reach the bell; but Sabaroff stopped her, and seizing her more firmly than he had done before, he cried—

"My reward! I claim my reward for so much patience!"

She was in his arms, panting, almost unconscious. He strained her to his heart, and kissed her passionately on the eyes, on the lips again and again. Exhausted by the struggle, Dora yet made a supreme effort, and succeeded in once more freeing herself from Sabaroff's hold; but he caught her by the arm, which he kissed devouringly. Dora sank fainting on the sofa.

At this moment the door opened, and Gabrielle, with agony depicted on her face, rushed into the room. She had come to fetch her sister to take her to Eva's bedside, for the child had grown rapidly worse. Seeing Sabaroff on his knees, gazing at Dora, she drew back, stifling a cry, and, wringing her hands in despair, she disappeared.

Sabaroff heard the cry, but did not move. After a moment, turning round and seeing no one, he rang the bell, hurriedly impressed a further kiss on the forehead of the unconscious woman, and left without waiting for the arrival of a servant.

When the servant entered, Dora had regained consciousness.

"Did you ring, ma'am?"

"No," she said; "what is it?"

She looked around her, passing her hand over her eyes and forehead. She realized that she was

alone. Her eyes were haggard. She looked wild, half mad.

"Where is he," she said, "gone?"

Then she fixed her eyes on the servant, who seemed to have a message to deliver.

"Well, what is it?" she repeated.

"Miss Gabrielle," replied the man, "told me to say that she had sent for the doctor, and that he is now with Miss Eva. Will you please go up at once, ma'am?"

Dora gazed fixedly at the man. She had not heard, or, rather, she had not taken in a single word of the servant's message. She signed to him to go, and he left.

Taking her head in both hands, she tried to remember what had been happening.

"My body burns," she murmured, "I feel as if I had been bitten by a reptile." Her eyes fell on her arm, where Sabaroff's kiss had left a mark that was still red. A cry of disgust and horror escaped her. She gazed again at her arm, leaped to her feet, and paced the room, almost foaming with rage. To wipe out that mark was her one thought. With her handkerchief she rubbed the burning spot, and, with a movement of fury, sucked it and spat as if she had been sucking poison from the bite of a snake. She was unrecognizable, transformed into a tigress ready to spring upon any who might come near. Suddenly an idea lit up her face, as she passed the fireplace in her furious pacings. She seized the poker and thrust it in among the live coals.

"Yes, yes, I will, I'll do it," she muttered.

Suddenly she heard a cab stop outside, and the street door open and close noisily. Philip, for it was he, bounded up-stairs and rushed into the drawing-room. It was half-past eleven.

Dora had the poker in her hand. She put it back into the fire.

"Ah, my dear Dora," said Philip, quite out of breath, "I can't tell you how sorry I am to have been delayed all these hours. I missed the nine-o'clock train, as I explained in my wire; but I must tell you all about that by-and-by. It's a long story. I left Paris at noon, as you know, but the train broke down between Canterbury and Chatham, and got in three hours late. But for that I should have been here at eight. The General is gone, of course," he added.

Dora stood motionless, speechless. She merely nodded her head affirmatively.

"How shall I ever be able to excuse myself to him? I wish now that I had followed your suggestion and put off this dinner, so as not to run such a risk. When you travel, you start, but you don't know what may happen before you reach home again."

He caught sight of the paper, which Sabaroff had signed, lying on the table. He seized it eagerly and began to read.

"What is this?" he exclaimed, overcome with joy. "Why, it is the purchase of my shell by the Russian government. The General ought to have stayed. You should have kept him . . . I should

have been so happy to thank him myself . . . but, I understand, the proprieties, I suppose, he did not like to stay on during my absence . . . Five hundred thousand roubles! here it is, all set down and signed . . . Ah, my Dora, my darling!"

Dora did not move. She was pale as death. She looked at him with eyes that appeared to see nothing.

Philip made as if he would seize her in his arms. She recoiled affrighted.

"Don't touch me! Don't come near me!" she cried in a voice that gurgled.

"Dora, what has happened? Heavens, you frighten me. What is the matter? Why, you are trembling, you can scarcely stand! Speak, speak, what is it?"

"Where have you been and where have you come from?"

"But I have just told you what happened to me. I missed the nine-o'clock train, and there was an accident . . . but what is the use of trying to explain anything to you in your present state? You evidently do not understand. I ask you again. What has been happening here to put you in such a state?"

"Ah, ah, he asks me what has happened!" she hissed, snatching the paper from Philip's hands. "This has happened. Your ambition is satisfied now. Here is the signature that gives you half a million of roubles, the gold for which you did not hesitate to make me submit to the society of a be-

trayer of women, a protector of Mimi Latouche, a man against whom my whole womanhood revolted. Stung by your heartless indifference to my pleadings, stung by your taunts that I no longer helped you, I have goaded myself to endure his presence constantly. And now I think my task is ended; I have paid the price; so take the paper—it is yours. It is signed. The gold will be handed to you."

"Dora, for God's sake, tell me, what does it mean? You never spoke to me like this before," gasped Philip, in a voice choking with anger and excitement.

"Hush!" continued Dora, "your ambition is realized. Your fortune is more than doubled; but when you are counting it up, think of me, your wife, in the arms of that man, every fibre of my powerless body revolting at the kisses of his polluted lips. Yes, the lips of that libertine have soiled mine; on my face, on my arms, he pressed his burning kisses. Look, look at this arm. See for yourself the mark that will not go. I am stained, contaminated. Oh! am I mad? No, I have drunk the bitter draught, I have gone through the mire of degradation; and now is the nightmare ended? Are you satisfied, or shall I call him back to offer him the rest?"

"I will kill him," cried Philip.

"Ah, rather kill me; that would be more generous," exclaimed Dora. "Take your money, and now let me go—unless," she added, with a sneer, "you have some other War Minister that you wish

to take your invention; think, I am here to pay the price they may exact for their approval."

"Dora, this is madness—you are out of your mind."

"I soon should be if I stayed here."

Dora broke off suddenly. The coming of the servant flashed across her mind. He had brought a message. What was it?

"Yes, yes, of course, I remember. Gabrielle sent for me a few moments ago—she had called the doctor to Eva—Eva! Ah, let me go to my child," she cried, waving Philip aside as he was going to speak again.

But before she reached the door, Gabrielle had opened it.

"Are you coming?" said the poor girl, with tears in her voice.

"Eva?"

"Yes, she is worse; it is diphtheria."

Dora realized now only the full import of the former message. With one horror-struck look at the distressed white face before her she rushed from the room, uttering a broken cry—

"Eva!"

Gabrielle followed after her, and Philip was left crushed, stunned, incapable yet of understanding clearly the terrible scene which he had just witnessed, or the new terror with which he was brought face to face.

XIV

EVA

PHILIP dropped into an arm-chair. His forehead was bathed in perspiration. He was seized with a convulsive trembling, caused by the rage that he felt at not being able to avenge there and then the outrageous conduct of General Sabaroff towards his wife. If he had known at that moment where to find the Russian, he would have gone straightway and had it out with him. He went through a torment of impotent fury and disappointment at thinking that his arrival had been but a few moments too late.

"Fool that I was!" he cried, "what have I done? Then Dora thinks"—he dared not utter his thought—"and, if so, I am guilty in her mind of the vilest, the most despicable act that a man can commit—it is a frightful idea! And yet my indifference, my insistence that Dora should receive that man, when she implored me not to oblige her to submit to his company—Sabaroff loves her still, then? Or does he, too, believe that he was encouraged by me? Oh, but the thought is horrible! The idea of it is maddening. Fool that I have been!"

For the first time he saw the enormity of his conduct. He called himself coward and criminal. In that dreadful hour he awoke from his dream and became himself again. The veil fell from his eyes, the transformation was complete. To do him justice there was no more inventor, no more blindly ambitious seeker after wealth, but the Philip of former days with no thought but for Dora. He would have given, that night, his last farthing for a smile from her!

Philip rose suddenly from his seat. He must take a resolution on the spot. He was face to face with a vital crisis on which all his future life depended. His first impulse was to go to Dora and throw himself at her feet to implore her pardon. "No," he said to himself, "as long as that contract exists, there is nothing to be done." He held it in his hands, that paper which had cost Dora so much. It burned to the touch. He looked at it twice, and he read it through. His mind was at once made up—tear up the thing, and fling it in the face of Sabaroff!

During this time there was much movement, much sound of coming and going on the staircase and in the hall. Suddenly Philip recognized the voice of Dr. Templeton saying, "It is the only way to save her—at least, the only hope." Upon this a servant came rapidly down-stairs, and Philip stopped him in the hall to ask—

"Where are you going?"

"To St. George's Hospital," was the reply.

"For Miss Eva? Is she worse?"

"Yes, sir; it appears that they are going to perform tracheotomy," said the man, who had heard the word and repeated it correctly.

Philip flew up-stairs. When he reached the door of Eva's room, saw the child half-choking and unconscious, and saw Dora kneeling by the bedside, he dared not enter, but stood in the doorway—heart-broken, pale, and immobile as death. That which crowned his misery and despair was the fact that Dora had not thought of sending down for him in such a moment as this. With difficulty he repressed the sob that rose from his heart. He realized then all the depth of the abyss that separated him now from his wife and child, an abyss of his own digging. No, he, adoring Eva as he did, dared not penetrate into the room where she lay.

Almost immediately a surgeon and two students arrived from the hospital. Philip let them pass, and then took up his post of observation again; but when he saw them open the case that contained the shining steel instruments and little sponges, the needles, and all the apparatus for their operation; when he saw the surgeon sign to Dora to rise and, by a touch firm and gentle, direct her to leave the bedroom, Philip could bear up no longer; all his courage forsook him. He fled to the library, and there let his choking tears have way. Wretched and forsaken, he broke down utterly.

"Oh God!" he cried, "it is too much; I have not deserved such punishment."

Gabrielle was a great help to the doctors, and prompt and reliable in her movements—a nurse of the first order. She watched with a calm, clear vision the work of the bistoury on the little throat, and knew exactly when to hand the implements necessary as the work proceeded, and earned the compliment of the surgeon thereupon; but it was not merely her nurse's intelligence that was at work, it was her love for the child she ached to save.

The preparation being completed, the surgeon, with a hand at once deft and rapid, introduced the tube into the trachea. Eva opened her eyes almost immediately. A flush of living color returned to her face, and she breathed freely again. The tube was then bandaged into place, and a long silk handkerchief tied firmly round the throat. Soon the child's face lost its aspect of deathly struggle and put on a smiling look of profound relief and happy peace. Her countenance lit up with a seraphic light; it was as though the child's soul had just been wafted back to its dwelling-place from a visit to paradise.

When all was done, Dora was fetched and shown the success of the operation.

"Then she is saved!" she cried, clasping her hands and lifting to heaven a glance of thanksgiving.

"Not yet," said the doctor, "there remains the morbid action to cure; but there is hope, every hope. Only you must watch the child with extreme attention; she must not be left for a mo-

ment. She must not be allowed to move for some time. If the tube got displaced, or if the heart, which is very feeble, should receive the least shock, everything would be over in a moment. "But, "added he, "I confide your child to this lady's care," indicating Gabrielle, "I have seldom met with a nurse so gifted. Rely in all security upon her; I have given her my instructions, and she knows to the full the importance of them."

The surgeon bowed to Dora, and departed.

Dora returned to the bedside on tiptoe, and, placing her finger on her lips, made signs to Eva that she was to keep perfectly quiet; then, throwing her a kiss and a smile of a guardian angel, she sat down beside the child. Her face betrayed no sign of weakness, expressed neither grief nor despair; it was scarcely sad. She had the look of a man who throws himself into the sea, to try and save some beloved friend in deadly peril of drowning.

Philip did not go to bed. He begged Gabrielle to come two or three times during the night to tell him how the child fared, and he remained in the library. Dora watched all night by Eva's bed. She was valiant, and inspired others with her own brave spirit. She had thrown aside the thought of all that had happened in the drawing-room a few hours before; far, indeed, from her thoughts was the man who had insulted her, and who no longer existed in her thoughts—the distracted mother had swamped the indignant woman. It was with death that she had to fight

now, and she fought with a sang-froid and a courage that were the astonishment and admiration of all who surrounded her.

The morning and the afternoon passed without new disquieting symptoms arising, and at night the doctor left his patient going on satisfactorily.

The following morning, about seven o'clock, Dora, worn out with excitement, had fallen into a doze.

Gabrielle went to tell Philip that Eva also was sleeping, and that such sleep was a very good sign. Their hopes rose considerably. Philip could not resist the longing he had to go and look upon his wife and child, both sleeping calmly at last, unconscious of pain and anxiety. He crept stealthily up-stairs, opened very softly the door of the dear child's room, and with loving eyes looked towards the bed. Unhappily, Eva just woke up. She saw in the doorway her father whom she loved and had not seen for several days; she raised herself eagerly and tried to call, "Daddy." The little form fell back heavily upon the pillow.

When Gabrielle came into the room again, Dora was still sleeping. Eva slept too, but it was the sleep from which none waken.

XV

THE SEPARATION

WHEN Dora awoke, Gabrielle was standing at the bedside, motionless, beautiful in her impassive grace, and looking like one of the angels that painters represent at the bedside of children whose souls they have come to bear to the abode of the seraphims.

Dora looked at Gabrielle, then at the child. With heartrending cry she threw herself on Eva's body. The struggle was over, and she had lost the battle. Her strength forsook her, all her being seemed to be crushed. She slipped inanimate on the floor. They bore her to her own room, where, for more than a week, she lay benumbed by her grief, unconscious of everything, hovering between life and death. None but Gabrielle and Hobbs were allowed access to her chamber. Philip was excluded by the doctor's command. In her delirium the name of her husband was often on her lips. "Philip," she would cry, "murderer! you have killed my child." He had been indeed her murderer! Involuntarily it is true, but nevertheless he had killed her. If he had resisted his desire to look upon his child, she

would probably have recovered, surrounded as she was by the most assiduous care. Her death had been accidental. In moving, and in trying to lift her poor little fragile body into a sitting posture, she had caused the derangement of the tube, and the heart had been suddenly stopped. Choking and syncope instantly did their dreadful work, and all was over.

Neither Dora nor Gabrielle ever knew, however, that Philip had been the involuntary cause of Eva's death. He himself never suspected the terrible truth.

"In spite of my injunctions," said the doctor, "the child has been allowed to move herself. She must have sat up in bed."

The last words that Eva had said to her mother came back constantly to Dora's memory. "How sad it is here! Oh, mama, how I wish we were in our other house; you know, the one where we lived when we were happy." Poor little darling! "When we were happy." A phrase like that in the mouth of a child of five, intended by nature for joy and brightness, had made Dora's heart bleed. The last words of the child were the irrevocable sentence of the father. Tears might have relieved Dora's desolate heart, and her faithful watchers hoped day by day for the crisis which never came. But she lay in numb paralyzing grief, and never a tear fell. Her life was not in danger, but her reason was. The delirium continued day and night. Often she did not know her two devoted nurses, Gabrielle and Hobbs.

Her utterances were mostly incoherent sentences in which three names occurred constantly—Philip, Eva, Sabaroff. "Is that man gone?" And she would seek upon her arm for traces of the loathed kisses he had placed there. "Where is Philip? Gone, too, no doubt." Then she would resume: "Eva? Yes, I am alone—all alone; everybody is gone." The scene quite unnerved the two dear women who were enforced spectators of it. They would take her hands and kiss them—Gabrielle with affectionate warmth, and Hobbs with the most touching respect.

The days dragged on, but the doctor did not despair. Dora's constitution was so strong, her will so powerful, her courage so lofty always, that there might be a crisis at any moment, and a favorable change might well ensue. He counted upon help in the carrying out of anything he might plan for the patient's good. He was well aware of all that had been passing latterly in the house. He was the friend and confidant of both husband and wife. Nothing had been hidden from him, not even the scene between Sabaroff and Dora. He advised Philip to leave the house. "You must do it," said he; "only time can cure your wife. Have patience. Go away for a few days. She is dazed; an explanation would but irritate her more—she is not in a state to listen. I quite expect to see her recover her mental faculties as suddenly as she lost them. The strength of her character is prodigious, and that strength will probably show itself in some sudden decision.

Do not cross her in anything," added he to Gabrielle, who had come to receive his directions. "Whatever decision she may take when the crisis is over, be very careful to fall in with it. I do not despair of anything, neither for her nor for you, my dear fellow," said he, shaking hands with Philip, in whose eyes tears were glistening.

Philip consented to obey. He left his house, went to Paris for two days, and on his return to London remained a week at the Alexandra Hotel, a few yards from his house, which he visited twice or thrice a day for news of Dora. We shall see later how he employed his time during these few days of banishment.

. Eva had been dead ten days. One morning, when Dora awoke from an excellent night of ten hours' sleep, Gabrielle and Hobbs were astonished to see their patient calm, and not only in full possession of her faculties, but apparently strong and courageous. The evening before she had wept for the first time, but the crisis had ended there.

Dora asked for breakfast. When Gabrielle reminded her that she had some medicine to take first, Dora reiterated her demand in an imperative fashion. "I tell you I am hungry," said she; and she not only asked for her breakfast, but she chose her own food. Her orders were obeyed. She ate a small boiled sole, an egg, and two slices of toast, and drank a cup of tea. Gabrielle and Hobbs were fairly amazed. They looked at Dora, they

looked at each other, they could not believe their eyes. It was a resurrection.

"I am going to get up," said Dora, when the tray had been removed.

"You cannot think of such a thing," said Gabrielle.

"I tell you, I am going to get up," repeated Dora; "I am better, much better."

Her eyes shot lightning glances. Her two nurses were dumbfounded, and knew not what to do. The doctor had not yet arrived on his morning round.

"Do have patience, ma'am. Wait at least until the doctor comes," said Hobbs, thoroughly alarmed. And she insisted upon it that her mistress must not get up until Doctor Templeton came.

"I shall not wait for anything," said Dora. "I tell you that I am going to get up."

She left her bed, swayed for a moment on her feet; but presently, standing bravely up without support of any kind, she said, with a laugh,

"You see quite well that I am better. I am cured. I shall dress and go out."

"But you are crazy," said Gabrielle.

"You are joking, ma'am," added Hobbs.

It is true that the doctor had told them to do nothing which might cross her, but the two good women said to themselves: "Yet, if she wanted to throw herself out of the window, we should certainly not let her do it. And to go out in her present state is probably about as dangerous."

They did not know what to do. The doctor did not come. Still less did they know what to think. Was Dora completely mad, or was this some marvellous and mysterious metamorphosis? No; she was not mad. Dora possessed something which has saved thousands of much-tried human beings from spiritual and moral shipwreck, and has reattached them to life again. She possessed that eternal god whom the Greeks called *enthusiasm*, that divine transport which, lifting the soul above itself, excites to great resolutions and lofty actions.

Eva was no more. Philip was gone, and little she cared to know where. She was free, mistress of her actions. She had no longer husband or child. Well, there was still left to her a third motive for living—Art! The mother and the wife had ceased to exist, but the artist was still alive.

Gabrielle tried once more to dissuade Dora from going out, but without success; no argument could influence her. She consented, however, that Gabrielle should accompany her. She dressed herself without help. The mourning raiment which had been ordered she had not yet been able to have fitted, but she found in her wardrobe a black dress which served. A hat which Hobbs, in a few minutes, trimmed with crape completed her toilette. She did not appear to be in the least excited. She was calm, deliberate, sure of each of her words, sure of each of her movements. Gabrielle, who was under the influence of this powerful will, obeyed her sister's

most trivial wishes, and appeared to be completely reassured about her. She begged her, however, for her own satisfaction, to let her feel her pulse and take her temperature. The pulse was normal, and the temperature did not indicate the least trace of fever. The case appeared to her to be a most exceptional one, almost phenomenal in fact, but she was reassured and much comforted. She no longer felt any anxiety, especially as the morning promised to be fine, and the open air could certainly do Dora nothing but good.

"Well, where are we going?" said Gabrielle, whose curiosity was keenly aroused.

"To St. John's Wood," replied Dora.

"To St. John's Wood?"

"Yes, I am going to take a studio there. I have something left to me still. I can paint, and paint I will!"

Gabrielle was amazed. She gazed with affectionate eyes at Dora, and kissed her. It was happiness to see her reviving interest in life.

"Send for a cab, darling," said Dora.

When the vehicle was at the door, Dora, with Gabrielle at her side, descended the steps with a firm foot, seated herself in the cab, and gave the driver an address in Finchley Road.

She was set down in front of the office of an estate agent, and told the driver to wait. There she was given several addresses of apartments to let. Two or three rooms, one of them large and possessing a good north light, was what she wanted.

After a round of inspection, she fixed her choice upon a set of rooms a few yards from Elm Avenue. The place suited her requirements in every respect, and the price was reasonable, thirty pounds a year.

She was not asked for references, for her name was well known in these regions. The people who let her the rooms thought that Philip had need of a studio there for some special work, and that his wife had been sent to choose a suitable one for him.

"When do you wish to take possession, Madam?" asked the agent who had accompanied her.

"At once," replied Dora; "that is, to-morrow or the next day."

And the whole matter was arranged then and there.

When Dora got into her cab again, she began to talk almost gayly. She looked happy once more. It was a glimpse of the old Dora that Gabrielle had known all her life, but missed for a while, and now rejoiced to see again.

At the end of a couple of hours they were at home again. Poor Hobbs had been a prey to terrible fears, all the while conjuring up in her mind visions of her beloved mistress being brought back on a litter in a dying condition. She had spent the time watching at the window in mortal anxiety.

Dora stepped briskly out of the cab, paid the driver, and threw her arms round the poor woman, who looked more dead than alive.

"Ah, at last," gasped Hobbs. "Oh, ma'am, how could you! how could you!"

So saying, she burst into tears, and then began to smile again on seeing Dora standing so alert and on the point of making fun of her.

"But what do you mean, my dear Hobbs?" said Dora. "I feel quite recovered. The fresh air has done me a lot of good and has given me a ferocious appetite."

"Well, well! I declare!" exclaimed Hobbs, comforted a little by these words and the sight of her patient. But she went on wondering whether she was dreaming or whether Dora had gone clean mad.

"Hobbs," said Dora, "we must make haste about our preparations. We leave the house to-morrow, and, God be praised, never to return," she added.

"To-morrow, ma'am!" rejoined Hobbs, with a look that seemed to express the impossibility of further astonishment.

"Yes, to-morrow, we get to a new home and take leave of this one."

"She has already taken leave of something else," thought the distressed servant.

"We go to St. John's Wood! But why do you stare so, Hobbs? You are not going to remain here and let me go without you, surely?"

"How could I think of doing such a thing!" said poor Hobbs, really hurt by the suggestion.

And she fell to laughing and crying softly to herself without knowing why, thoroughly bewildered at the turn things had taken.

Dora passed the remainder of the day in choosing the things she intended to take away with her; first, the furniture of her own bedroom and that of Hobbs, then some studio belongings, the two easels, and her portrait which Philip had not finished, the old clock that stood in the hall, and a few other things that belonged to her personally; some table silver, and many an odd piece of furniture that had been dear to her in the old house, but which had been since relegated to the attics, as being not worthy to figure in the new one. The next day she bought a Japanese screen and a few things which, while costing little, would yet help her in the execution of the project which she had set her mind upon. These purchases made, there remained twenty pounds in her purse.

She summoned the servants to the dining-room and told them that their master would return home shortly and would pay their wages.

On the morning of the second day after her sudden decision, a van was brought to the door for her few effects, and at five o'clock she had turned her back upon the house she had grown to loathe. Two days later she was thoroughly installed in her new one.

Here she had succeeded in fitting up a studio, which was an imitation, a cheap and pathetic reproduction, exact in almost every detail, of the one in which she had passed the happiest hours of her old life in Elm Avenue.

Each item of furniture occupied precisely the

same spot as in the St. John's Wood studio, and the whole effect was tasteful, for the work had been a labor of love to Dora. The two easels were placed side by side in the centre of the room, and on Philip's stood the unfinished portrait. On one side of the door she had placed an old oak chest that she had picked up at a dealer's for a small sum, and which resembled closely one that Philip owned and prized ; on the other side of the door stood the old clock, which she did not, however, set going. What did the time of day matter to her now? Clocks go too slowly when one is tired of life. Away in a corner she hung Philip's old working jacket which she had come across in the depths of a chest in one of the attics. It would no longer be only in her dreams that she would see the St. John's Wood studio, for it had sprung into existence again under her hands ; and in these surroundings she would be able to continue the life that had been interrupted by the events already chronicled. She was going to try to bring to life again one part of her past. She turned to work to help her to forget the other.

She had come here with new hope in her heart, to call her talent to her rescue, and to serve Art faithfully and ask of it her bread. At the least, she felt that here she could, when her time came, die without a malediction on her lips.

Dora gave orders to Hobbs to refuse her door generally. Lorimer and Dr. Templeton were the only exceptions. She laid the greatest stress on

these directions, and Hobbs solemnly promised to obey to the letter.

Without delay she traced herself a programme which she resolved to follow out faithfully. She would work at her easel three hours every morning, would take outdoor exercise every afternoon to keep herself refreshed and strong, and the evenings should be devoted to reading and needlework.

She had brought with her several excellent photographs of Eva, and fully intended to make a portrait of the child whom death had robbed her of. Her brush would help her to see again that sweet flesh of her flesh. "But not yet, not just yet," she said.

As she had to earn a livelihood, and painting was to be her means of subsistence, she resolved to look about at once for a model. She chose a little Italian boy who played a concertina under her windows almost every day. The picturesque urchin was ready enough to pose for the *signora*, and beamed with delight at the shilling Dora put into his grubby little palm at the conclusion of each sitting.

Dora took her first walk in the neighborhood, and Hobbs went with her. They set out without any destination in view, but had not been walking more than five minutes when they found themselves in Elm Avenue. No trace of any emotion crossed Dora's face, and, instead of turning back, as Hobbs was for doing, Dora would insist on going as far as Number 50. The house was

to let. No one had lived in it since Philip left. Dora drew up on the other side of the road in front of the house. Hobbs tried to draw her away, for she feared that the sight of her old home might be too painful for her mistress.

"No," said Dora, "I am going to show you how thoroughly cured and strong I am. . . . I am going in."

Hobbs remembered Dr. Templeton's injunctions never to cross her whims, and so did not persist further.

Dora rang the bell. A woman, evidently a caretaker, opened the door.

"Do you wish to see the house, ma'am?"

"Yes, if you please," replied Dora.

She was invited to "step in," and the woman prepared to show her over the premises.

"The studio is a very fine one, and communicates with the garden. Your husband is an artist, I suppose, ma'am?"

"Yes," said Dora.

"Then you would like to see the studio first, perhaps?"

As soon as they reached it, Dora asked the woman to leave her there alone a little while, under pretence that she had measurements to take and many details to think out.

For the first time since the sudden change had come over her, which had so astonished her sister, Dora was seized with a fit of sadness. Her lips trembled, her teeth chattered. Hobbs did not take her eyes off her mistress, but she did not

venture to speak. Dora opened the door that led to the garden, and a sharp cry escaped her. A little girl of Eva's age was romping about on the lawn. She stood rooted to the ground, and a flood of tears gushed from her eyes.

"Let us go away," said Hobbs. "You ought never to have come in at all. You think yourself much stronger than you are."

"Yes, let us go," said Dora.

They straightway went home.

Dora remained pensive all the evening. She scarcely opened her lips again that day. The book she tried to read fell again and again from her hands. When she noticed Hobbs look at her, she said, "I tell you it is nothing. I was wrong to go into the house, and I shall not do it again. But how was I to know that, when I opened the garden door, I should see on the lawn" . . .

She broke off, looked once more at Hobbs, and could no longer contain herself. Tears choked her respiration; she was stifling. Sobbing like a child, she hid her grief in the good woman's bosom.

"It shall never happen again, Hobbs; don't scold me, it is all over."

Next day she was calm again but weak; and Hobbs, without telling her, sent a telegram to Gabrielle to beg her to come to her dear mistress, that day if possible.

Gabrielle lost no time in responding to the call; but she could not discover in Dora any symptoms that were at all disquieting. Dora from that day avoided Elm Avenue in her walks.

She had set bravely to work at her painting; and as the weeks went on she seemed to pick up the dropped thread of life, and gradually to attach herself to it again. Her health did not suffer in the new existence, and her courage remained firm. At the end of a month she had done the picture of the little Italian boy, and sold it for twenty-five guineas.

"Look, Hobbs," she said on returning home; "look what I have earned—twenty-five guineas! Well-earned money that!"

And, in her delight, she kissed the bank-notes. Then finding herself quite naturally on her favorite topic, she poured into the ears of the devoted Hobbs an eloquent harangue upon the wrong use of money and the demoralization of the rich. The discourse was edifying, and duly impressed the only listener; but Philip, to whom it was really addressed, was far off, and did not get the benefit of it.

XVI

PHILIP RETURNS TO THE FOLD

THE day after General Sabaroff had dined at Philip's house, he left London for Paris, and from that city he went to St. Petersburg. He made no further effort to see Dora. "Perhaps I have been deceiving myself after all," he said; "I shall forget her." The very evening of his arrival in Paris, he occupied a box at the Théâtre des Variétés with Mimi Latouche.

Philip, when the doctor had advised him to leave home for a little while, started immediately for Paris. Next morning he presented himself at the Hôtel Meurice, and sent up his card to Sabaroff, for he had learned that the General was staying there. Philip was soon shown up to the first floor, where the Russian had a sumptuous suite of rooms, and was ushered into the salon. In a state of feverish agitation, easy to understand, he awaited the General.

He had but two or three minutes to wait.

"Sir," said Philip, as soon as the two men were face to face, "I reached home from Paris a few moments after the departure of your Excellency from my house. I will not take up much of your

time now. I have only a few words to say. I am an Englishman, and in my country we do not fight duels with men who insult our wives; we set the law on them, or we give them a sound thrashing."

"Kindly explain yourself," said Sábaroff, in a tone at once mocking and arrogant, and glancing about for a means of defence.

"I will explain in two or three words," said Philip.

He drew out of his pocket the envelope which contained the torn-up contract that Sabaroff had signed in Dora's presence.

"Here is the paper you signed in my house," said he; "I return it." So saying, he flung the torn pieces of paper in the Russian's face, and the bits of paper fluttered in all directions.

"You will answer to me for this affront, sir," said Sabaroff.

"With the greatest pleasure," rejoined Philip. "I am not in England now; I am in France; and you know what I mean by that. I am at your service. Here is my address."

The same evening a duel with pistols was arranged by two of the General's aides-de-camp and two artist friends of Philip.

Sabaroff hated Philip, and he promised himself to be revenged for Dora's disdain.

"I will kill him," he said to himself.

The encounter took place next morning at eight o'clock in the Bois de Vincennes.

Philip lodged a ball in the right shoulder of his

adversary. Sabaroff would have killed Philip with pleasure.

At eleven fifty Philip took the train for London, and at half-past seven he was back in his rooms at the Alexandra Hotel. The duel had been kept secret; there was no mention of it in the newspapers.

A week after Philip's return to London, he was told of Dora's sudden recovery and flight to St. John's Wood. Dr. Templeton kept him informed of everything that was going on. It was arranged that Philip and Hobbs should meet once a day, and these daily consultations were held without the knowledge of Dora, until further orders.

Philip took Dr. Templeton's advice on every point.

He did not write to Dora. "No," he said to himself, "all the faults are on my side; and it is for me to repair them, not by speeches and promises, but by deeds. I am not ready yet with a plan of action; but I shall find one soon, and I will clear myself in Dora's eyes. I have lost my child, but I will regain my wife. I will save her for her sake and my own. If I fail, life is no longer of any use to me. Art could never console me; Dora is more fortunate than I; she will find in painting a forgetfulness of the past. For me, I must win back Dora, or everything else is worthless, and I am done for. To work, then, cautiously! Everything will depend on the way in which I set about it."

He began reviewing his position. The state of

his finances was satisfactory. He still had thirty-two thousand pounds, of which twenty-eight thousand were invested in first-class securities.

"By Jove, I have only to clear out of that infernal house in order to be rich; nearly fifteen hundred pounds a year and my brush! Why, of course, I am rich." And he hurled at himself a succession of all the abusive epithets in his vocabulary. All his late follies arose and passed in procession before his mind's eye, and he asked himself whether it could really have been he who had committed them. At last his plan of action was clearly traced, and he prepared to execute it in detail, and that without delay.

The first thing to do was to interview his landlord, or rather the agent of the noble duke who owned the district of London in which Philip's house stood. He wanted permission to cancel his lease. He was prepared for a decided refusal, or, at the least, for difficulties without end. He was ready to compensate his Grace by paying him a good round sum. The matter was concluded much more easily and rapidly than he had expected or hoped. A rich American, whose daughter lived in the house next to Philip's, and who had long been wishing to settle close to her, was delighted to seize the opportunity, and finally took the house as it was, and renewed the lease with the landlord. It was a stroke of luck for Philip, and he said to himself, "Fortune is decidedly turning a better face to me."

He knew that 50 Elm Avenue was still unlet,

and he went next day to see his former landlord. The house was not only to be let, it was for sale. The price asked was three thousand pounds. Philip had nearly four thousand in bank. He accepted without hesitation, and the bargain was sealed on the spot. His lawyer attended to the details of the purchase. Philip had the place painted and papered from top to bottom, he disposed of some superfluous furniture, and in about a month from the time of his decision he was reinstalled in his old home. The furnishing was exactly the same as before, perhaps a trifle richer. He had been very careful to introduce no change into the studio. The only addition visible was the portrait of the little Italian boy that Dora had painted, and that he had secured by the help of the dealer, who, following Philip's instructions, offered her twenty-five guineas for it.

He engaged fresh servants; not one of the former staff was retained. If ever he should be granted the happiness of seeing Dora return to the nest, he wanted to have there no witnesses of the Belgravian scenes to recall her painful memories.

He set to work ardently and full of hope. Every day Hobbs came, unknown to Dora, to bring him news of her mistress.

Hobbs had told Dora that No. 50 was let, then that it was inhabited, but by Dr. Templeton's orders she did not divulge the name of the occupant. Dora was sad to hear the news, but she merely said, "I am surprised that it has been

empty so long; it is such a pretty house, so convenient, so quiet so—" She could go no further, her emotion was too strong. Presently, with an effort to regain command over herself, she added, "May that house be an abode of happiness to those who inhabit it!" Hobbs was sorry to have spoken, and yet she was burning to say to Dora, "Why, it is your husband who lives there, and who holds out his arms to you; go and throw yourself into them." But she had promised to keep the secret, and she did not break her word.

Dora did not gain strength so fast as her friends had hoped she would. Excitement, will-power, and courage had stood in her good stead at the start, but she had started too rapidly, and she had not the physical strength to carry her far at the same pace. She had unfortunately counted a little without herself. In this new existence, monotonous and almost without aim, there was not enough to satisfy her lofty character, her bright and energetic nature, which cried out for movement and an intellectual life. She still boasted of enjoying the pleasures of poverty and of preferring them to the others, but she was, in these days, chiefly brought to face with the dulness and the bareness of poverty. Discouragement invaded her heart; she began to feel that she was vegetating and not living. Her courage was forsaking her. Later might come despair and a desire to have done with the world.

It was weak health, grief, and solitude that were undermining her. Her temper, always so equable

formerly, so gay, was beginning to sour. The strangest contradictions manifested themselves in her behavior, and that is a disquieting sign in a woman with a mind so well balanced as Dora's. She had refused her door to every one, and yet she complained that people had forsaken her. She said she wanted to forget the past, and yet she clung to everything that could remind her of it.

She had promised Hobbs never to go near 50 Elm Avenue, and for a long time she kept her word. But one day she wanted to satisfy her curiosity, to see what sort of an appearance the house had, now that it was reoccupied. She came home in a state that distressed her faithful companion.

"It seems, Hobbs, as if everything were conspiring to overwhelm me. I have been to see the house."

"What! after your promise!"

"Yes, I know it is horrid of me, but I could not help it! Do you believe me when I tell you that I felt as if I recognized some of our own dining-room furniture through the window. And the curtains are exactly the same!"

"Oh, ma'am, it is just your fancy," said poor Hobbs, who feared to hear more. "At all events you are cured of going there any more, I hope."

And there the matter ended. Lorimer had several times written to Dora, but, not having received any answers to his letters, he had not yet ventured to try and see her. He rather dreaded the first meeting.

"He too has forgotten me and given me up, you see, Hobbs," said Dora.

"Really, ma'am, you are not reasonable," replied Hobbs; "Mr. Lorimer has written several times to you. Have you answered his letters?"

"No, it is true I have not, but what is there that I can say to him? No, Hobbs, I have no friends left—only you, my good, brave companion; but it is very wrong of me to make you share my sad existence. It is selfish of me. Hobbs, you shall not stay much longer. You must leave me —not just yet, but soon—"

The good woman, melted to tears, asked what she had done to deserve to be sent away. She vowed she was quite happy, and her tears fell in great hot drops on Dora's hands, that she kissed with avidity.

"If Mr. Lorimer does not come to see you, why don't you write and ask him to come? He would not wait to be asked twice, I know! He at least has always been a real friend, and I am sure is devoted to you."

"That is true," said Dora.

"And then he is so merry; it does you good to look at him. He carries gayety wherever he goes. And he is so kind! Write to him, and I will guarantee that he will rush out here as soon as he gets your letter."

"Yes, Hobbs, you are right, and I will do it to-day."

She immediately took pen and paper and wrote to Lorimer.

"Hobbs, you don't happen to know who the people are that are living in our old house, I suppose."

"No, ma'am," said Hobbs, rather scared at the question.

"Try to find it out."

"Oh, why, ma'am?"

"It would interest me to know, that is all."

"Some say it is a hermit, a bearish kind of gentleman, who sees no one and never goes out."

"Ah," said Dora. "Is he a painter?"

"I think so, ma'am, but I am not sure."

"He has had the house done up like new."

"I have heard that he is going to be married—that he has had the house finely decorated for his future wife."

"Ah, and who told you all these details?"

"The tradespeople," replied Hobbs, quickly.

Dora went on writing, and Hobbs, fearing she had said too much, determined to turn a deaf ear to any questions Dora might put to her in future on the subject of 50 Elm Avenue, and its new master.

XVII

DORA'S STUDIO

We have every reason to suppose that if Lorimer had not called on Dora in her new quarters, it was because he had not dared to do so. He saw Philip often, and so had news of her nearly every day. He had feared to be importunate, all the more so that Philip had told him how Dora had closed her doors to every one, and had shut herself up in complete seclusion.

It was in the early part of the month of April, 1898, that Lorimer received from Dora a letter in which she said to him, "If you will come, dear friend, I shall be so pleased to see you. I am in very poor lodgings, but I am sure that will not make you pass me by on the other side. Do come soon; I am longing to see a friendly face."

Lorimer lost no time in responding to her call. Hobbs opened the door to him, and beamed to see his cheerful face.

"Oh, sir! I am glad to see you, sir," said she.

"Well, my dear Hobbs, and how are things going by this time?" asked Lorimer, in his cheeriest tones.

"You will do mistress such a lot of good, sir!

She has not been at all herself lately. She is very weak to-day, and has passed a very bad night—she is quite changed since the day she saw our old house was occupied again, and yet she could not have thought that it would remain unlet for ever."

"She does not know who it is that is living there, of course?"

"No, no, sir; but I should dearly love to tell her. I believe it would put her into a better humor."

"Take care that you do not, Hobbs; she must not hear on any account. You will know why later on. You may be sure that Mr. Grantham and I are not idle. We have an idea in our heads, and you shall help us by-and-by to put it into execution; so, for the present, not one word, you hear?"

"You can rely upon me, sir."

"Yes, I am sure of that. And now, can I have a little talk with Mrs. Grantham?"

"Yes, sir, in a minute or two. She will be so glad to see you; you will do her much good! The doctor is with her for the moment."

"What does he say about her?"

"Nothing—I can't get anything out of him. He shakes his head. It's disheartening. And mistress will not listen to reason; she tears up all the prescriptions, especially lately, for the last week or so—it is very sad. I shall go and tell her you are here."

Lorimer, left alone in the studio, looked around him, and took in all its details.

"Why, it's freezing here!" he said to himself. "Heavens! it's no wonder, there is positively no fire. Is she so poor as— Oh no, it can't be so bad as that. What pathos in this room—an exact reproduction of that lovely one in the other house, where we used to have such merry times! Ah, there is the old clock in its place—not going, I see. There is Dora's portrait on Philip's easel, still lacking the finishing touches. There is Philip's jacket, hanging just where it always hung—the two easels and stools—everything in place, nothing wanting but Philip himself. What treasures of tenderness are revealed in this poor counterfeit presentment of the other studio! How happy her life must have been there, that she should want to make an exact imitation of the room, and so revive the past! There are people who break with their happy bygone times, others who cling to them determinedly. A few pounds have transformed this miserable studio into a living souvenir that will kill her. And yet, why do I say *will kill her*, when it is just this living souvenir that keeps her alive—that will keep her alive, perhaps. Here were two beings who loved each other dearly, and between whom a simple suspicion, a terrible misunderstanding, seems to have erected an insurmountable barrier. Philip wanted to be rich, poor beggar! He has not been long learning that there is but a step from Plutus to Pluto. Most of the old proverbs want re-editing. I know one that ought to run: 'When wealth comes in at the door, love and happiness fly out

at the window.' But poor old Philip is cured, radically cured, once and forever. He talks nonsense still sometimes, but it is the other whom I am most anxious about, and who vows that everything is over. Philip goes in for philosophy, and that is a healthy sign. He has decided that his wife is better off than he is, because she has found consolation in her painting. He would give his whole house for Dora's garret. And the fellow tells us these things in a tone of conviction, as if he were uttering the wisdom of a Solomon or a Socrates. The panegyric of poverty is all bosh; it is an affectation! When I see a book entitled *How to Live Comfortably on Two Hundred a Year*, I take it for granted that the author is a millionaire."

Dr. Templeton came out of Dora's bedroom and surprised Lorimer in the midst of his reflections. He was looking troubled and in a bad temper.

"That woman will exhaust my patience, I know she will. She is the most obstinate, the most—the most—there, I can't find a word for her."

"Don't try, doctor, you have explained yourself admirably."

"Yes, I am getting out of patience at last. I can do nothing with her. She takes no notice of my advice or my prescriptions. If she is bent upon dying—why, she must die, I suppose; she does not want a doctor for that."

"That does not always go without saying," said Lorimer, jokingly.

"If we cannot get her out of this place, she has not another month to live. She must have change of air, and change of scene and company, or she is done for. She has not a chance — and that damned picture!" he vociferated, shaking his fist at the easel—"that confounded portrait! the sight of it is killing her by inches. Nothing will induce her to part with it — she was bent on bringing it here—I tell you I have a very good mind to fling it out of the window. Poor woman!" he added, calming down, "it distresses me to see her. The wound is too deep, we can do nothing to cauterize it."

"Listen to me, my dear doctor," said Lorimer, "between ourselves Dora is carrying this thing much too far. I know the story from beginning to end. It is absurdly ridiculous! Philip has, so to speak, nothing to ask forgiveness about, unless it be for having neglected his wife for an invention that absorbed all his thoughts."

"My dear fellow, when a woman of Mrs. Grantham's sort loves her husband, she exaggerates everything. The slightest inattention becomes to her a subject for deep grief, a look of indifference causes her horrible suffering. Little things take on gigantic proportions. A man should surround with the most constant care and affection a woman who loves him as our friend here loved her husband."

"But, after all, a busy man can't pass all his time at the feet of his wife. There is the morning paper, you know, and his correspondence, and a

thousand other every-day occupations. Give him a chance! Happy the wife who only has an art or an invention to be jealous of. Isn't it enough for a woman to know that she is loved by the substantial proofs of affection that are given her?"

"No," replied the doctor, "for us men it suffices to know that we are loved, but with women the case is quite different. They love to have it told them—some of them so much that they could hear it from morning to night and night to morning, without ever growing weary of the tale!"

"Mistress is coming in a moment," said Hobbs to Lorimer.

"Look here, Hobbs," said the doctor, "how does Mrs. Grantham manage to get a living here? How does she keep you and herself? It is perhaps an indiscreet question, but it is important that we should know just how matters stand."

"Don't you trouble about that, doctor," replied Hobbs. "We pay our way and save money. Why, my mistress sold a picture yesterday!"

"Really!—and for how much?"

"Well, sir, you are getting a little inquisitive. For twenty-five pounds, if you must know."

"Twenty-five pounds!" said the doctor, winking at Lorimer. "Well, and how much is your rent?"

"Thirty pounds a year. Don't be alarmed about us, we don't spend all the money we make."

"We make! Oh, I see, you work too."

"I should think I did, sir; I clean the rooms, I do the cooking—"

"And what about your wages?"

"My wages—the affection and kindness of my dear mistress, and I shall never ask or expect any increase. We are all right, doctor, don't make your mind uneasy about us. If only I could see her grow strong, everything else would be all right."

"Devoted woman!" said the doctor to Lorimer; "it does one good to feel that there are hearts like that beating in the world! It isn't such a bad place, after all."

Then, turning to Hobbs and pretending to be very angry, he said, "By Jove, I'll go and find the landlord, and get him to raise the rent, and turn you both out, if you don't pay it. As for this portrait, I'll throw it in the fire or pitch it out of the window, do you hear?"

He shook hands with Lorimer and went out.

"What did he say?" exclaimed the frightened Hobbs, when Dr. Templeton was out of hearing.

"He says he will pitch that picture out of the window to begin with, and I will help him do it, too."

"No, no; he must not do that," cried Hobbs, excitedly. "That picture is the only thing she has got left now. See, she is copying it. I have caught her kneeling before it and kissing it. Sometimes she will sit here in front of it and smile so happily—then she will look at the other stool beside her, and her eyes fill with tears. She believes herself in Elm Avenue. Do you know what

she did once? Oh, it's too ridiculous, I ought not to tell you."

"Go on, Hobbs," said Lorimer, mastering his emotion, "tell me all about it, you know how much I am interested in everything that concerns Mrs. Grantham."

"Well, she made me sit on master's stool one day," said Hobbs, in a low, confidential voice. "Oh, no, I can't tell you, you will laugh at it—and I could not have you laugh at anything she did," added she, with tears in her eyes.

"Oh, please, Hobbs."

"Well, then," continued Hobbs, "after making me sit down on the stool she threw the old velvet coat on my shoulders—there it is, hanging over there—to make the illusion more complete. She put a palette in my left hand and a brush in my right—then she burst out laughing, and the next minute had thrown herself into my arms sobbing like a child. Throw the picture out of the window," added Hobbs, shaking her fist at the closed door; "throw it in the fire, indeed! Let him come and try it! I will obey all the orders he likes to give me, but don't let him dare to come near that picture. Why, sir, it would kill her. Oh, you won't let him do it, you won't, will you? Promise me he shall not touch it."

"No, Hobbs," said Lorimer, profoundly touched. "I promise you that nothing shall happen to it; make your mind easy about that."

And he took the good woman's hands and pressed them with warmth.

"Thank you, sir; thank you," said Hobbs, wiping her eyes. "Oh, I hear mistress moving, I will go to her now."

"Dear devoted creature!" said Lorimer to himself, when Hobbs had gone out. "The doctor is right, the world is not so bad. I wonder what all this means: The episode of the easel—what can that signify except that Dora loves Philip still, and cannot forget him? Alas, perhaps it is only the Philip of the old days that she tries to keep in her memory. Anyhow, it is a good symptom —my little idea is growing."

Hearing steps in the adjoining room, he drew from his pocket a small packet which Philip had confided to his care. It was the "little family," of which the reader made the acquaintance at the beginning of this story. Philip had said to him, "Carry this letter to Dora and plead for me. If she refuses to listen to you and refuses to read my letter, give her this little packet, it will intercede for me."

Dora came into the studio pale and evidently ill, but walking with a tolerably firm step. She made a kindly gesture to Hobbs, and closed the door of the bedroom.

"Ah, my dear friend," she said to Lorimer, "how good of you to come! I have not been very well lately, but I am better, much better—well! what now? Why do you look at me like that?"

"Why do I look at you?"

"Yes."

Lorimer had never seen Dora looking more beautiful than to-day. Her very pallor added a new charm. Her black gown was moulded to the lovely lines of her figure, and her hair was becomingly dressed. Lorimer had taken both her hands in his and was looking at her with eyes that expressed a mingling of sympathy, respect, and admiration.

"Why do I look at you?" he repeated. "Well, then, because I should like to give you a good kiss."

"Why, then, why don't you?"

Lorimer kissed her on both cheeks, while still holding her hands.

"I should just like," he said, "to take you up in my arms, carry you off and place you in Philip's."

Dora quickly disengaged herself from Lorimer's light hold and repressed an angry gesture. She offered him a chair and, taking one herself, said, "My dear Gerald, never pronounce that name in my hearing, and we shall be good friends still, as we always have been. Speak to me of yourself. Have you a new piece on hand? I hear that *Majella* is still drawing crowded houses."

Lorimer saw that he had gone a little too fast at the start. He resolved to be more cautious. A better opening might occur presently, perhaps.

"No," he said, "it is of you we will talk! You are not looking well. Work, solitude, all that sort of thing is no good for you in your present state. Come, Dora, I am an old friend of your child-

hood, let us talk freely, you and I. You must leave London for the country, you want fresh air. It is the opinion of Dr. Templeton, and it is mine too."

"I am very happy here, I have all that I want; don't be afraid—I have plenty of occupation—I work—I try to forget."

"Ah, yes; you try to forget by surrounding yourself with everything that can help you to remember. It is a strange manner of setting about it. I have come here to fetch you, to beg you to come to my sister's in the country. I will take you there. Come and breathe the pure air in the fields, come and see the apple-trees in blossom—it will put new joy into your heart."

"Oh, it would be quite impossible now—later on, perhaps—I do not say no."

The conversation did not take the turn that Lorimer wished.

"Listen," said he, in the tone of a man who has taken a sudden resolution, "I want to speak to you upon a rather delicate subject, but you must not stop me. You have just forbidden me to mention the name of your husband before you. Very well, I will not mention his name, but I am going to make you acquainted with certain facts which you ought no longer to be ignorant of. I do not come here to plead in his favor, and yet, as even the blackest criminal is not executed without a chance of defending himself, I really do not see what there would be outrageous, even in that. Will you listen a few moments?"

on," said Dora, indifferently.
esterday—for that matter, I have
every day since he came back

been?" asked Dora, with but a
erest.

er—I mean he often used to

went there an incident hap-
to me ought to interest
ut General Sabaroff. He
before his eyes the paper that
house, and threw the pieces

Dora, startled, "and what

they fought with pistols—
—your husband lodged
right shoulder."
to hide the feeling of joy
y rose within her.
good shot—he himself

he now to pronounce your
have used it yourself."
ter lips.
tract is torn up!" she
I paid dearly enough
—I have a right to re-
sts. Philip did well,
?"

"Why, that is all—ah, no, I was forgetting. Philip begged me to hand you this letter—and this packet."

Dora went pale; she put the packet aside, and was going to tear up the letter when Lorimer interrupted—

"What are you going to do?" said he.

"Tear up this letter?"

"You will do nothing of the kind: that letter is from Philip, from your husband."

"My dear Gerald, my husband no longer exists for me."

"Dora," rejoined Lorimer, "you are cruel. Your husband loves you, and is overwhelmed with sorrow."

"My husband never loved me. I thought he loved his art and his wife, he only loved his invention and his money."

"Philip has never ceased to love you. He may have lost his head for a little while, when fortune visited him almost without knocking at the door. The other day the faults were on his side, now they are more on yours. You are unjust, cruel to him, cruel to yourself. Your obstinacy, my dear Dora, bids fair to put an end to the pair of you. Yes, that is the point things have come to. Now, do you hear what I say? His despair and repentance ought to touch you; what he did in Paris the other day ought to satisfy you. He lives only in the hope of your forgiveness, in the hope of your return."

"Philip did not hesitate to thrust me into the

arms of a libertine. If I had yielded to that man's hateful desires, Philip would probably never have destroyed the contract."

"Hold your tongue, Dora," cried Lorimer, "you are uttering blasphemies. You have allowed a silly idea, an absurd suspicion to gain an entrance into your head, and, like a grain of sand in the eye, it has carried on its irritating work till it has blotted out your vision, and you can see nothing except this molecule that seems to have turned into a mountain. Take care, Dora, or your mountain will crush you as well as blind you. Do you know that by obstinately refusing to listen to reason, a woman cuts herself off from friendly sympathy. People cease to take an interest in her woes. If you wish to alienate the sympathy of your most devoted friends, you are going the right way to work."

"I do not need any one's sympathy," replied Dora, proudly; "and I do not ask for it."

"Once more, Dora, listen to me. Philip may have neglected you, in order to throw himself body and soul into that invention which absorbed him night and day. But, remember, such a piece of work as that is a very exacting, inexorable mistress. You felt his indifference keenly, and it wounded you—the rest exists in your imagination alone. Now the mistress is discarded, cast out completely, let the artist return again to his easel at your side."

"Never, oh, never!" cried Dora. "Ah, my dear Gerald, if you only knew how I loved that man!"

"And how you still love him," ventured Lorimer.

Dora rose suddenly, the thrust had not miscarried.

"I am sorry if it hurts you, but it is the truth," added Lorimer, with a significant smile.

"What do you mean?" demanded Dora, who thought Lorimer's remark somewhat out of place, and a little over-familiar.

"Come, now, sit down here in front of me, your friend. You know I am a bit of a student of human nature; it is my stock-in-trade. My dear Dora, do not attempt to throw dust in your own eyes—you love Philip still; everything in this room testifies aloud to the feeling that you cannot stifle. Oh, do not start, do not deny it. If I am not right, what is the meaning of all this that I see around us?"

"In these surroundings I can evoke the Philip of the past, and that helps me to forget the Philip of the present."

"He is one and the same. He was changed for a few months, but to-day he is what he used to be, and what he will be always—the artist who loves you and longs for you. Dora, what have you to say in reply?"

"My head burns so, dear friend, spare me now. We will talk again—but by-and-by."

A knock was heard at the door. "Oh, would you mind seeing who that is; I am not expecting any one," said Dora.

Dora threw an anxious look towards the door.

Lorimer went and opened it.

The visitor was no other than our old friend, Sir Benjamin Pond, city alderman and patron of arts in his spare moments.

He evidently expected to find himself in a hall or anteroom, instead of straightway standing in a studio in the presence of Dora and Lorimer. He was seized with a little fit of timidity, which he had difficulty in mastering, and which made him awkward in the extreme.

He removed his hat, and stood turning it in his hands. Regaining his equilibrium, after a moment, he advanced respectfully towards Dora, without venturing, however, to hold out his hand.

"My dear Mrs. Grantham—Mr. Lorimer, how do you do?"

Dora and Lorimer bowed distantly without speaking, and seemed to wait for him to explain the object of his visit. The worthy man wished himself under the floor.

"I came," he said, stammering—"I came—that is to say, it's just this, I only heard yesterday of your removal here, quite by accident, and I also heard that you had with you the picture that I so much wanted to purchase last year. Ah, there it is, I see! You observe I have not lost all hope of possessing it, that picture which—"

Dora and Lorimer looked at Sir Benjamin without uttering a word, and the poor man grew more and more embarrassed.

"Well," he went on, "I have come to beg you to sell it to me. That is why I came early—to be sure to find you in. I do not, my dear madam, wish

to profit by the regrettable circumstances in which you find yourself placed, to offer you a low price, or to bargain for the picture, believe me. No, no; I have too much respect for you—too much admiration for the painter. I wish to behave honorably over the matter, and deal generously, as a gentleman should."

He would have given hundreds of pounds to be leagues away from this studio that he had pushed his way into.

"I will willingly give you," added he, "five hundred pounds for the picture. What do you say to the offer?"

Dora and Lorimer did not open their lips. Their eyes never quitted those of the alderman. Lorimer moved back a little to a more retired post of observation; the scene began to interest him keenly. To Dora five hundred pounds was a small fortune. Would she sell the canvas? By withdrawing a little, he placed her more at her ease, left her free to decide according to the dictates of her heart, while, as I said before, he himself obtained a better view of the little comedy that was being enacted before him.

"Yes," said Sir Benjamin again, "five hundred pounds down. I am ready to draw you a check this minute."

"This picture is not for sale, Sir Benjamin," said Dora, frigidly, "neither for five hundred nor for five thousand, nor for any other sum that it may please you to offer."

Lorimer would have loved to cry *Bravo!* "She

does love him then still—we shall save her," he said to himself.

"You see, my dear Sir Benjamin," said he, "the offer is useless. I suppose you still have the spare 36 by 50 to fill up, eh?"

"Ah, ah," laughed the alderman; "yes, that is to say, no, it is a new vacancy on my walls. Every one has his fads here on earth, has he not? The Queen gives shawls to her friends when they marry, I give pictures to mine. It gives me occasion to purchase new pictures. Well, madam," he added, turning to Dora, "I admire you—I will beg you to excuse me. I thought that perhaps, you might have been very glad to. . . I wanted very much," he went on, retiring nervous and awkward towards the door, "to have that picture, but I wished also to do you a good turn—to render you a friendly service which could not hurt your susceptibilities . . . After all, artists try to sell their pictures, don't they? . . . And I should have thought that such an offer at such a time—"

The unfortunate man floundered more and more.

"Well, excuse me," said he, "I will wish you good morning."

His back was now against the door. The next second he was in the street again. The poor fellow mopped the perspiration from his brow.

"The woman is mad—she is a prig!" he said to himself, as he hailed a passing hansom and set out for the city, where he was more in his element.

Dora was choking with anger. Lorimer rubbed his hands with joy.

"Not even a front door of my own to protect me against the importunities of such a fool as that. Oh, the sympathy of such a man! The drop that overbrims the vase! The kick of the jackass! And you can stand there and laugh."

"Ah, my dear Dora, what good you have done me!" exclaimed Lorimer, who could not contain his delight. "You were quite right—not for five hundred, nor for five thousand, nor for a million. That picture is a treasure no gold could pay for—never let it go—Philip will finish it. Oh, how happy you have made me! You love him still! You know you do," he cried.

"You know nothing about it," said Dora, and, taking the little packet that Lorimer had brought her from her husband, she went towards her bedroom.

"I am tiring you," said Lorimer. "I ought not to have stayed so long, but it seemed to me I had so many things to say to you—and I have not got through half of them. Look here, I have a little business in the neighborhood, my time is my own, may I come at four o'clock to ask you for a cup of tea?"

"Why, of course," said Dora. "How nice of you! Oh, it is good to see a friend who is always the same."

Lorimer took her outstretched hand and respectfully lifted her fingers to his lips. Then he went out. He could have danced for very joy.

The scene he had just witnessed confirmed him in his belief that there was yet hope for Philip.

He had a plan evolved out of his dramatic author's brain, a little *coup de théâtre*, which he thought had every chance of turning out a success. He had already talked of it to Philip and Dr. Templeton, and both of them had pronounced it an excellent idea. Hobbs also was in the secret. Lorimer judged the time ripe for the execution of this plan. On leaving Dora he jumped into a cab, and went to warn the other conspirators to hold themselves in readiness. The doctor was to make his appearance at Dora's about five o'clock, to see how she was doing. Philip was to wait in the street in readiness for a signal, which should bid him to the scene of action in due time. When everything was decided, and the details well arranged, Lorimer took Philip to his club, where they passed an hour or two in talk before returning to St. John's Wood to proceed to action.

XVIII

LORIMER'S PLOT

WHEN Dora was alone, she took Philip's letter and put it by without opening; then she softly began to untie the small packet. She could not repress her emotion at the sight of these little flowers, that brought back the memory of the happiest days of her life. It was like a breath of Elm Avenue, stealing into her attic.

"Our little family," she said. "Poor little flowers, you were happy when Philip plucked you, happy even as I in those days was happy! And to-day you are faded, limp, and lifeless, even as my poor heart. Oh, cursed be life, I cannot weep even at sight of you . . . You, at least, have no memory to torture you. What would I not give to obliterate my own!"

When Hobbs came in to set the table, she found Dora lying drowsily back in her arm-chair, holding in her hands the flowers whose history the good woman knew well. She did not like to disturb her mistress, and retired discreetly into the bedroom to wait patiently until Dora should wake. But Dora did not stir, and the beefsteak would certainly be spoiled. Hobbs returned,

and softly and deftly set about her preparations.

Dora opened her eyes, and was annoyed to see Hobbs smiling at sight of the flowers she still held in her hands. It seemed as if the servant had surprised a dear secret, and was reading in her mistress's heart something that she herself could scarcely decipher yet.

"The pansies come back! . . . Then it must be master who has sent them," said Hobbs.

"Yes," replied Dora, "yes, it is he; they no longer mean anything to him, so he sent them to me. He gets rid of them."

"And shall I tell you what I think? I think that these flowers mean a great deal to him still, and if he has sent them here, it is that they may say to you, 'In the name of the happy past that these flowers will remind you of, come back to me. I love you and I wait for you.' That's what I think."

Dora did not encourage Hobbs to continue. She rose and went to the table; but she had no appetite, and scarcely touched the succulent food that Hobbs had prepared for her.

"I expect Mr. Lorimer at four o'clock," said Dora; "he is coming to have tea with me. Meanwhile, I am going to read. I want to be alone here for awhile, Hobbs."

When the lunch had been taken away, Dora remained in the studio, and installed herself in an arm-chair with a book in her hand, but she did not read. The thoughts chased one another

through her brain. Doubt and incertitude pursued her and disturbed her inmost soul, but although she could not exactly explain to herself what was passing within her, she felt that this doubt and incertitude were no longer of Philip's innocence, but of his culpability. The fact is, she was waiting eagerly for Lorimer's return, not only because his breezy company acted as a tonic to her nerves and seemed to bring forth fresh strength, but because she was dying to learn more details about Philip's doings.

She did not say it to herself in so many words, but something within her cried out: "You are unjust, your obstinacy blinds you; lend an ear to all that can throw light on this matter; do not refuse any longer to learn the facts."

Lorimer was punctual to the minute. As the clock struck four, he walked into the studio. He found Dora in the same dress which she had worn in the morning, but he noticed that her hair was differently arranged, and that her very simple mourning robes yet possessed an air of elegance. In her whole appearance there was something which revealed a woman who had retained a consciousness of her beauty.

Lorimer seemed in gayer mood than ever. Dora noticed it at once, and the good spirits of her old friend insensibly roused a response in her.

Hobbs brought in the tea, and Dora poured out two cups.

Lorimer took a piece of cake, drank his cup of tea, and asked for a second. He helped himself

to another slice of cake, and drank his second cup of tea with evident relish.

"Another cup?" said Dora.

"With pleasure; your tea is delicious, and tea to me is a life-saving liquid, a sovereign remedy for numberless ills. No washerwoman sips her bohea with greater gusto. It is tea that revives me after fatigue; tea that stimulates me when I am at work; tea that cheers me in desponding moments. Long live tea!"

"You must not overdo your devotion," said Dora.

"Oh, my dear friend," rejoined Lorimer, "you must not overdo anything, if it comes to that—you allow a cigarette?"

"I allow two; have you a light?"

"Yes, thank you."

Lorimer lit a cigarette, inhaled the fragrant smoke, and sent it soaring in blue spirals to the ceiling.

"We were speaking of abusing things just now—well, as a matter of fact, it is our most salient national trait. I pass most of my time in preaching upon this text. The word *moderation* scarcely exists for us. The apostles of temperance, for instance, exhort to total abstinence, instead of moderation. The word *temperance* cannot by any stretch of its meaning imply total abstinence, the essence of its significance is moderation. When one speaks of a country as enjoying a temperate climate, that does not mean that the country has no climate at all, it means that it has a moderate climate, and is not very hot or very cold."

Dora began to wonder whether Lorimer was going to philosophize long, or whether the conversation would soon turn upon Philip again.

"It is in the Anglo-Saxon blood," continued Lorimer. "We fling ourselves heart and soul into our enterprises, even to the danger of our well-being and our happiness; we do not know how to steer the middle course. For instance, now, take Philip's case. It is just that. There you have a striking example of my theory. A Frenchman, who had invented his shell, would probably have gone on painting pictures. The Frenchman, who has made a fortune, eases off steam, and takes things easily. The Anglo-Saxon, who has made a fortune, wants to straightway make another. Philip is English; he can't help it... I call that the complete absorption of the individual; and, after all, this very defect in our national character has been a source of glory, for it has helped us to do great deeds and conquer half the earth."

"Granted," said Dora; "but it is not your theory upon what you are pleased to call the complete absorption of a man, which will explain how that man can forget all his obligations to his wife."

Lorimer smiled as he realized that Dora continued to think of Philip.

"Oh, but it does, at least up to a certain point. First of all, what do you mean by all his obligations towards his wife? If to neglect her is to fail in all his duty towards her, my theory explains the phenomenon perfectly."

"Come, come, my dear friend, do you entertain, for instance, that a husband who loves his wife, or even only respects her, forces her to receive the visits of a man whom he knows to have been in love with her before her marriage, and who has earned for himself a well-merited reputation as a libertine? Is that kind of thing a natural consequence of the complete absorption?"

"We are getting on now," thought Lorimer.

"Does he invite that man to his house to dine, and then miss a train, so that they may be thrown together *en tête-à-tête* for a whole evening? Is that your absorption, too? Ah, don't talk to me, my dear Gerald, there are circumstances which awake the most absorbed man on earth."

Lorimer remained dumb, and looked at Dora in the strangest manner, as if seeking to know whether he had heard aright. He threw his cigarette on the tray and drew nearer to her. He hardly knew whether to pity her or to reproach her bitterly.

"What," said he, "you do not know what happened to Philip at the moment that he was about to leave the Paris hotel to return to London in time to dine with Sabaroff? He never explained all that to you? Why, he told me that he had written you a long explanation of it all."

"It is quite true that he has written to me several times since that dreadful day, but I have torn up, unread, every letter he has sent me since I left that hated house."

"Well," said Lorimer, with an air of mixed pity

and amazement, "upon my word, you can do clever things when you set about it! If you had read his letters, you would have learned the whole truth."

"Tell me yourself, tell me everything," said Dora, breathlessly.

"Listen, then, while I show you how unfounded was your crowning suspicion of him. Philip's business in Paris being finished, he had breakfasted early, and was descending the staircase on his way to his cab, when, as he reached the first-floor landing, a door opened, and a gentleman came out. Judge of his feelings at finding himself face to face with his father! One glance served to show Philip that a great change had come over him. From a hale, haughty, self-reliant man of sixty, he had turned into a pitiable invalid, and looked prematurely old and feeble. A broken cry, 'my son!' arrested Philip's steps. Struck with pity at the sight of the change of his father, he allowed himself to be led through the still open door, and there ensued a moving scene in which the elder man humbled himself before the younger and implored his forgiveness. The minutes fled by meanwhile, and when Philip, unnerved and shaken, reached the station, it was only to find that the train had left two minutes before. The rest you know."

"Oh, my poor brain is on fire," murmured Dora.

"Dora, you have misjudged Philip. He made you rich, thinking to add to your happiness—

that is the only harm he ever did you. Ah, say that you forgive him, and will go back to him—he is waiting for you."

"No, no, never in that house."

"No," said Lorimer softly, "not in that house, but the old studio in Elm Avenue."

"Where? What did you say?" exclaimed Dora.

"Philip has left the house you hate so, because of its cruel souvenirs. He has gone back to St. John's Wood, where you spent the first six years of your married life, and, in order never to be turned out of that house, he has bought it."

"But the house is inhabited," said Dora.

"I know it."

"Why, then—it must be Philip—"

"Who occupies it," said Lorimer, "he is only waiting for your presence, dear Dora, before beginning to work again. He will devote the rest of his life to painting in the old studio. It is his irrevocable resolution."

A ray of ineffable joy spread over Dora's face; but the shock had been too violent and too sudden. She was not strong enough to bear such emotion as the news had caused her. Repeating over Lorimer's phrase, "It is he who occupies the house! Oh, my dear old studio!" she fell fainting into his arms, and he called Hobbs to come quickly to her mistress's aid. After a few moments her eyes opened, she smiled at Lorimer, and he took her hands and kissed them.

It was five o'clock. Dr. Templeton arrived, and

had Dora led to her bedroom, with a recommendation to rest quietly on the bed awhile.

"It is only a little weakness," said he; "her pulse is almost normal. This sort of thing is often caused by sudden emotion. It will soon be over, but I will stay near her for the present."

"My plan is working well," said Lorimer; "I will give the signal to Philip. Be careful that she does not enter this room until everything is ready."

The doctor nodded assent, as he opened Dora's door and disappeared inside.

Philip came up-stairs, trembling like a culprit. When he looked around and took in the details of the poor studio, which was such a faithful copy of another dear to both, he could not restrain his emotion. All that Dora had kept back from his knowledge this pathetic room revealed to him. He had difficulty in keeping back his tears.

"Dora is there," whispered Lorimer, pointing to the room.

"Ah, she is there!"

He stepped softly over on tiptoe. Through the door of this room, the heart of Philip sent a message to Dora: "If a man's devotion can revive a woman's long-lost smile, and redeem the wrong that he has thoughtlessly inflicted, you shall live joyously once more, cherished and adored. The remainder of my life shall be consecrated to your happiness."

Dr. Templeton came into the studio, and announced that Dora was sleeping.

"To tell you the truth," said he to Lorimer, "your plan frightened me somewhat at first. I was afraid that the shock might be a little too much for our fragile patient. She is far from strong; she has been overtaxing her strength, and the emotions of this day, followed up by such a scene as you have planned, would, I feared, be a heavy strain to subject her to. However, I have just carefully sounded her heart, and, thank Heaven! I feel relieved. It is beating regularly enough now, and I think we can, in all security, try the little manœuvre you suggest. It is a trifle melodramatic perhaps, but an excellent idea for all that."

"Well, then, to work at once," said Lorimer. "Let us proceed to make this room a still more faithful copy of the St. John's Wood studio than Dora has done, by adding to it the artist himself."

Philip, docile as a child in the hands of these two friends, lent himself to the scheme, and did exactly as he was bid. He began by taking off his coat and donning his working-jacket, then, palette and brush in hand, he seated himself on the stool in front of the easel that bore the portrait of Dora.

"Perfect," said Lorimer, who surveyed every detail, as if he had been superintending a rehearsal of one of his plays. "If I am successful to-day, this scene will be my *chef-d'œuvre.*

Dr. Templeton went to Dora's room and found her sleeping soundly.

"She sleeps still," he said, as he rejoined the others; "do not let us disturb her. When she wakens Hobbs is going to let me know, and I will go in and fetch her."

They remained talking together in hushed tones for about twenty minutes. Hobbs opened the door, and made a sign to signify that the patient was awake.

Immediately Dr. Templeton rose and went to the bedroom, while Lorimer lowered the blinds and darkened the studio, so that nothing could be clearly distinguished. Philip again took up his position at the easel.

"As soon as ever the room gets lighter, work away at the picture, so as to give the impression that you are finishing it, and take no notice of anything else around you. . . Hush, I think I hear her coming!"

Sounds were heard coming from Dora's room.

The door was opened slowly.

"Now, then, attention!" whispered Lorimer, "and quite steady, please, as the photographers say."

The doctor led in Dora, followed by Hobbs.

"How dark it is!" said Dora. "Have I slept a long while? Mr. Lorimer is gone, I suppose."

Lorimer was watching from behind a screen the working out of his stratagem.

"Dear Mrs. Grantham," said Dr. Templeton, "I am going to make a particular request of you. I want to try an experiment. Just to please me, would you mind taking this palette and these

brushes, and seating yourself in front of that easel?"

The reader remembers that Dora had placed side by side, in her poor room, the two easels that had so stood in Philip's studio.

"It is not exactly a favor I ask, it is a prescription that I have great faith in for you, and that may have great results — I beg of you!"

"Why, of course, with pleasure," said Dora, allowing herself to be drawn towards the second easel.

"Now, mix your colors and prepare to do some painting."

"But what shall I mix?" demanded Dora; "I am only too willing to obey."

"Oh, never mind what—I am making a little experiment with you—that is all; I will tell you later on more about it—come, you can't refuse me."

"But, my dear doctor, the room is too dark; I cannot see. Is it evening already?"

"You are right. I will give you some more light."

Little by little, the doctor raised the blind. Philip did not stir. Faithful to his instructions, as soon as the light was let in, he began assiduously using his brush.

Dora, languid and ignoring all that was taking place around her, was mechanically mixing her colors, while waiting for Dr. Templeton to tell her that he had finished his experiment, and that

she might rise from her seat. The room was now quite light.

"Well, doctor," said she, "is it over?" She turned round, and saw Philip at work on the portrait, and absorbed in his occupation, as he had been in the dear old days gone by. Palette and pencils fell from her hands. She gazed silent and breathless. She took her head in both hands, as if to assure herself that she was awake and not dreaming.

Philip turned with an imploring look in his eyes. Then, laying down his brush and palette, he rose slowly and stood with open arms.

Dora uttered one cry, "Philip!" and, sobbing with joy, she buried her face in her husband's breast.

"Dora, my Dora!" repeated Philip, caressing the beautiful head that lay once more in his embrace.

They remained for several minutes, oblivious of everything around, united in a new-found exquisite bliss.

Hobbs ran to hide her own tears and emotions in the bedroom of her beloved mistress.

"Well, my dear doctor," said Lorimer, "we have had an afternoon's work, but it has been successful, eh?"

"Yes," replied Dr. Templeton, "she is saved."

"And now I am going to wind up the old clock and set it going once more," said Lorimer.

This done, the two men softly stole out of the studio.

And the old clock, with its good round, cheery face, seemed to smile at Philip and Dora, while its tick-tack said, as plainly as could be, "Here are the good days come again, and I will count their hours for you."

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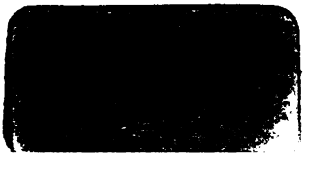

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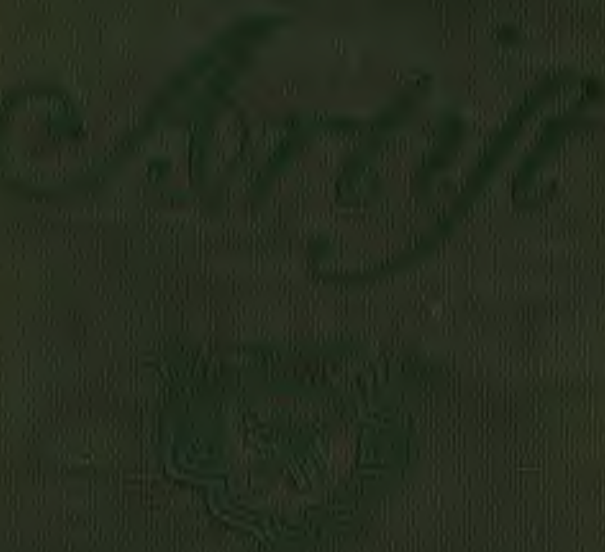
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